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United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION
IRAQ

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Acknowledgements

Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, previously called "Assessment of Development Results". The evaluation, which covered the period 2015-2018, was conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP, in close collaboration with the UNDP Iraq country office.

UNDP has been present in Iraq since 1976, when the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement was signed. Since 2003, UNDP has operated as part of the United Nations assistance strategy coordinated by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which was established at the request of the Government of Iraq via Security Council resolution 1500 (2003).

The evaluation reviewed the work of UNDP at a time of crisis for Iraq. By mid-2015, 2.9 million people had fled their homes, reaching 5.8 million at the peak of the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Over 8.2 million people required immediate humanitarian support as a direct consequence of violence and conflict linked to the takeover of Iraqi territory by ISIL. The National Development Plan, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the UNDP country programme priorities became of secondary importance compared to the need to retake ISIL-occupied areas, address the humanitarian crisis and deliver immediate post-conflict stabilization.

The evaluation found that UNDP in Iraq has successfully created a model of intervention under the stabilization component to support key political objectives and recovery in the immediate post-conflict space. UNDP Iraq has also demonstrated the importance of retaining programming flexibility in the face of fluidity in the immediate post-conflict setting and of adjusting the programme to address emerging needs.

The evaluation also found that limited attention has been paid to support the country's priorities outside of newly liberated areas. Although this is not unusual for a country office responding to an emergency, a return to regular programming in support of the country's development priorities is now required. The areas of governance, environment and economic reform have rightly been identified as core areas of engagement for UNDP going forward and will benefit from the development of coherent and strategic programme which builds on the UNDP comparative advantage.

I trust this report will be of use to the readers seeking to better understand the wide array of support provided by UNDP, including what has worked and what hasn't, as well as the factors that have influenced the performance and development contributions of UNDP in Iraq. I hope that the results and recommendations of this report provide a valuable input for the formulation of the next UNDP engagement strategy with the Government of Iraq.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
CPD	Country programme document
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FFIS	Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization
FFS	Funding Facility for Stabilization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
ICRRP	Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme
IDP	Internally displaced persons
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IOM	International Organization for Migration
I-PSM	Iraq Public Sector Modernization Programme
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
JCC	Joint Crisis Coordination Centre
JCMC	Joint Coordination and Monitoring Centre
LADP	Local Area Development Project
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MCT	Management consulting team
MNF-I	Multi-National Force - Iraq
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official development assistance
PMSU	Partnership Management and Support Unit
POPP	Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures
PPM	Programme and Project Management
3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SSR	Security sector reform
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Evaluation Brief

As of 2012-2013, after years of dictatorship followed by sanctions and three major conflicts, Iraq was achieving notable gains. Economic growth was projected to reach 9 percent on average over the period 2014 to 2018. However, the situation was reversed by the end of 2014 due to a resurgence of violence and the collapse of the price of oil. It is important to recognize that the conflict against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which started in January 2014 in Anbar and led to the fall of Fallujah, was the culmination of a progression of armed conflicts that weakened the State and fractured Iraqi society over decades.

At the end of 2018, the humanitarian crisis entered a new phase. Combat operations against ISIL had ended in December 2017 and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons were returning to their homes and communities. Assessments conducted by the Ministry of Planning and analysed by the World Bank estimate that reconstruction will take at least 10 years and cost over US$88 billion.

UNDP support to Iraq was designed to address the most pressing needs in areas newly liberated from ISIL while maintaining reduced, core programmatic support in other areas. The country programme for 2016-2020 was developed during 2015 and did not provide an adequate guiding framework for this new situation. The Independent Country Programme Evaluation therefore covers the period 2015 to 2018, following the structure designed in April 2017 as a result of a management transition process which organized programmatic work around four pillars: stabilization; economic diversification and employment; governance and reconciliation; and environment and energy. The evaluation also covers the UNDP role in the coordination of the Emergency Livelihoods and Social Cohesion Cluster.

Findings and Conclusions

UNDP in Iraq has successfully created a model of intervention under the stabilization component to support key political objectives and recovery in the immediate post-conflict space. It has demonstrated the importance both of retaining programmatic flexibility in the immediate post-conflict setting and of adjusting the programme to address emerging needs. UNDP is delivering the largest stabilization programme to date with significant results[1] and is considered a highly valued partner. Even highly vocal critics recognize the value of the work delivered by UNDP. Institutional partners in Iraq are clearly committed to continue working with UNDP and supporting it directly if possible.

Newly liberated areas and areas receiving large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) received strong support through the stabilization component, with relatively limited attention paid to the country's priorities outside these areas. Southern areas are experiencing major difficulties and are currently covered only by small interventions. Major programmes which managed to continue to operate outside of newly liberated areas and areas receiving IDPs have not progressed from the delivery of outputs to outcomes. Less attention has been paid to the three other pillars, although a limited number of programmes have been implemented. This is not unusual for a country office responding to an emergency, although the return to regular programming has taken longer than it might have.

While UNDP Iraq has effectively managed the delivery of the largest stabilization programme to date, innovated operational processes and improved turnaround time to increase transparency and efficiency, it lacks a coherent and comprehensive programme

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[1] As analysed by the evaluation team, the Funding Facility for Stabilization is the largest stabilization programme to date, even when the multi-project and multi-partner stabilization programmes are considered. This means that the entire stabilization programme (including the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme) is by far the largest stabilization effort to date.

structure in line with national and regional priorities that is matched by resource mobilization efforts which capitalize on recent successes. Because of limited quality assurance and monitoring functions and the absence of evaluation capacity, there is insufficient analysis of performance and effectiveness to support programme development, prioritization and implementation. The absence of knowledge management and information-sharing has exacerbated the tendency to implement programmes in isolation, thereby limiting the opportunity to exploit synergies and leverage expertise.

Recommendations

- In developing the new country programme, UNDP should: (1) align its contributions to the changing priorities in Iraq, driven by the shift to a more stable environment; (2) identify its comparative strengths and key areas where it is able to deliver effectively; (3) develop clear and supporting theories of change for its work; and (4) support its strategic approach with strong resource mobilization efforts which build on the high level of trust by donors and institutional counterparts established through the stabilization programme and aim to expand the UNDP presence and expertise based on emerging needs. The country programme development process should ultimately strengthen the strategic focus of the programme, develop synergies across pillars and ensure sustainability.

- Emphasis must be placed on preventing conflict arising from the lack of reliable access to services on a sustained basis and on preventing secondary migration. UNDP senior management, with support from donors and the Special Representative for Iraq of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), should advocate strongly with the Council of Ministers and Minister of Finance for reliable allocations from the national budget for recurrent and operational costs associated with services and infrastructure rehabilitated by UNDP. This should be combined with a programme to support local-level social cohesion, in coordination with UNAMI, which is mandated to support cohesion at national level.

- The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator should encourage relevant United Nations agencies to provide support to schools, hospitals, clinics and industrial plants rehabilitated by UNDP/Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) to ensure long-term sustainability in line with Security Council resolution 2421 (2018).

- Building on the revision of the UNDP Programme and Project Management Manual of 2018 which introduced the possibility of a "bridging programme",[2] UNDP should consider developing an instrument for post-conflict stabilization in lieu of a country programme for countries in the midst of conflict where flexibility and political objectives become the priority.

- The country office should strengthen its results-based systems and practices. These efforts should be driven by the need to establish clarity and a sense of priority over what UNDP is seeking to achieve in Iraq. It should also carefully monitor the efficiency gains of delivering all development projects through the Service Centre established to deliver the stabilization projects and ensure that adequate measures are in place to maintain the current level of transparency and efficiency. The Service Centre may experience a significant increase in workload if, as expected, areas of work outside stabilization grow significantly, while the stabilization component, and the FFS in particular, remains active. Additionally, If UNDP continues in a leading role, senior management should ensure that the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster is resourced with adequate human resources, specifically a National Cluster Coordinator and an Information Management Officer who are independent of UNDP programming and dedicated to cluster work.

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[2]   "Programme and Project Management (PPM)", UNDP Prescriptive context rewrite, section B5.14, June 2018.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose, objective and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted this Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) in Iraq to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of the UNDP contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of the UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. The purpose of the ICPE is to:

- Support the development of the next UNDP country programme;

- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders and to the Executive Board.

Additionally, this report identifies operational best practices from the stabilization programme in Iraq, with a view to support an exchange with other programmes (Annex 8).

The last Assessment of Development Results (ADR) was completed in 2015 and provided an account of the UNDP contributions until January 2014 and provided recommendations directed at the implementation of a new country programme during a phase of stability. The UNDP country programme for 2016-2020 was developed during 2015, before the full-blown crisis triggered by the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). It is widely considered that as a result, the country programme did not offer a totally suitable guiding framework.[3]

In December 2018, the Iraq country office, in consultation with relevant counterparts and the Regional Bureau and taking into account the limited guiding validity of the existing country programme, decided to shorten the cycle by one year to develop priorities relevant to the current country context and align UNDP to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process, with a scheduled submission of the country programme document (CPD) to the UNDP Executive Board in September 2019.

This ICPE was therefore conducted in the same year of submission, not one year prior as per standard approach, and will serve as an input to the formulation of the new UNDP country programme for 2020-2024.[4] The scope of the evaluation took into account the evolution of the country programme since 2014 (beginning of the crisis and end of coverage of the last ADR) and the changing context UNDP has faced during its programme implementation, including the country's increasing insecurity and political and economic volatility.

BOX 1. Main evaluation questions

1. To what extent has UNDP effectively positioned itself in a rapidly changing political, social, economic and security environment to address Iraq's critical issues through the delivery of its programme, while leveraging its own comparative advantage?

2. To what extent has UNDP been able to achieve its initial and adjusted programme objectives in contribution to each pillar?

3. What factors contributed to or hindered the UNDP performance and eventually, the sustainability of results?

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[3]   It should be noted that while this view is widely shared, there is no consensus.

[4]   The evaluation team has since been informed that the most likely date for submission of the CPD to the Executive Board has shifted from September 2019 to January 2020.

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: IRAQ

1.2 Country context

Development. As of 2012-2013, after years of dictatorship, the impact of sanctions and three major conflicts, Iraq was achieving notable gains. An upper middle-income country which had made important progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, Iraq was the world's third largest oil exporter and had the resources to increase its oil production significantly. The economic growth rate was projected to reach 9 percent on average over the period 2014-2018.

Challenges remained, including a significant disparity between urban and rural areas, lack of progress on income equality, less progress than expected on gender parity, access to potable water and environmental problems, including the risk that the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the two major surface water sources, may dry up by 2040. However, overall, the country had reduced extreme poverty and child malnutrition and infant and child mortality had decreased significantly. Food insecurity had been reduced. Net enrolment in primary education had increased and girls' participation in school was improving. Women's participation in parliament was above the 25 percent constitutional quota. Malaria had been completely eliminated.[5]

Conflict and humanitarian crisis. What gains had been achieved were reversed by the end of 2014 as a result of a resurgence in violence and the worsening of the economic environment due to the collapse of oil prices. To fully understand the challenge, it is important to recognize that the conflict against ISIL is the culmination of a progression of armed conflicts, in large part asymmetric in nature, that have weakened the State and fractured Iraqi society over decades. Iraq was ravaged by its 1980-1988 war with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the 1991 war (Operation Desert Storm) that decimated its military and was followed by crippling sanctions after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and internal sectarian conflict after the United States-led invasion and occupation of 2003. The Iraq conflict is an early example of a new category of wars in which the United Nations, and by extension UNDP, as a member of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and whose Resident Representative was for most of the period in question also the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, is called to play a role. This was a war in which a coalition of countries militarily invaded to remove and replace the Government of another Member State of the United Nations on premises implicit in concepts such as "preventive action", regime change and the responsibility to protect that override the basic principles of sovereignty that until recently were the bedrock of international relations.

In a war of this type, existing democratic institutions are weakened and belligerent parties tend to form and recreate themselves over time. As a result, it could be argued that Iraq has been through two civil wars since its invasion by coalition forces. The current activities of UNDP are largely in response to the second, a war against ISIL. Furthermore, in wars of this type, the coalition military presence is extremely important and the "root causes of conflict" that UNDP normally works to address from a developmental perspective are elusive and changing. Indeed, the nature of the conflict has metastasized over time as sectarianism has been allowed to dominate the body politic.

This sets Iraq apart in three important ways. First, it called on the United Nations as a whole to deploy and play its role in the midst of a very active international conflict, where external military intervention created conditions leading to political entities multiplying and metastasizing; where the United Nations was ultimately viewed as a collaborator with invading forces; and at least in the very beginning, was seeking to operate under conditions of foreign occupation. Second, the instability created as a result of the invasion and the weakening of institutions resulted in a multiple relapses into armed conflict, first of a sectarian nature and then with the rise of ISIL, a force with a considerable foreign component estimated to be as high

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[5]   Iraq UNDAF 2015-2018.

as 50 percent which,[6] unlike other terrorist groups, managed to capture and hold large swaths of the country. Third, it called on UNDP to work closely in support of broader objectives of the United Nations and the international community, especially as they pertain to the peace process. Since 2011, the coalition forces have not been present in Iraq in substantial number,[7] although they remain the main sources of official development assistance (ODA) to the country.

By mid-2015, 2.9 million people had fled their homes, reaching 5.8 million at the peak of the conflict. Over 8.2 million people required immediate humanitarian support as a direct consequence of violence and conflict linked to the takeover of Iraqi territory by ISIL and the counter-insurgency operation launched by the Government and its allied forces. The largest prize they claimed was the city of Mosul, the major cultural hub of Iraq, and as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious city, its fall to ISIL was of both military and symbolic importance.

Poverty. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) have suffered multiple shocks, losing much of their wealth through the destruction of their assets, the death or injury of family members and the loss of jobs and businesses. While displaced families were welcomed by host communities, the scale of the crisis has overwhelmed the resilience of the host communities.[8] Access to employment/livelihood opportunities continues to be the main concern of IDPs.[9] The poverty rate is estimated to exceed 40 percent in areas impacted by military operations against ISIL.[10] In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq,

poverty has increased from 3.5 percent to 12.5 percent since 2014 as a result of the large influx of IDPs from other regions of Iraq.[11] To add to the situation, 250,000 refugees fled the intense fighting and destruction in the Syrian Arab Republic, seeking safety in Iraq's Kurdistan Region.[12] Population groups have been affected differently by the years of conflict. Thirteen percent of all IDP and returnee households are headed by females and they are at heightened risk of violence.[13] Women comprise 51 percent of the displaced population and the instability has changed family structures with 1.6 million women widowed.[14]

Reconstruction. At the end of 2018, the humanitarian crisis in Iraq entered a new phase. Combat operations against ISIL ended in December 2017 and hundreds of thousands of displaced people have been returning to their homes and communities. Retaken areas are being cleared of explosive hazards and rubble and major efforts are under way to restore electricity, water and sewage grids, re-establish the Government's social protection floor, jump-start local economies and open schools and health centres. Damage and loss assessments conducted by the Ministry of Planning and analysed by the World Bank estimate that reconstruction will take at least 10 years and cost well over US$88 billion. The most affected social sectors are education and health, which endured substantial damage totalling $2.4 billion and $2.3 billion respectively. Industry and commerce and agriculture incurred most of the damage among the productive sectors, with damages amounting to $5.1 billion and $2.1 billion respectively.

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6   "Two Arab countries fall apart", The Economist, 14 June 2014.

7   The Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF–I), often referred to as the coalition forces, was a military command during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and much of the ensuing Iraq war, led by the United States (Operation Iraqi Freedom), United Kingdom, (Operation TELIC), Australia, Spain and Poland, responsible for handling and conducting military operations. The MNF-I replaced the previous force, Combined Joint Task Force 7, on 15 May 2004 and was later itself reorganized into its successor, United States Forces – Iraq, on 1 January 2010. The Force was significantly reinforced during the troop surge of 2007. As of May 2011, all non-United States coalition members had withdrawn from Iraq, with the United States military withdrawing from the country on 18 December 2011.

8   United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

9   International Organization for Migration (IOM) Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) Round III, 2018.

10   OCHA, 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

11   OCHA, 2018, Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment.

12   Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan, OCHA, 2015.

13   OCHA, 2018, Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment.

14   UNDP, 2017, Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) Annual Report.

Economic, environment and governance context. Economic decision-making has been dominated by short-term needs and rent-seeking. Fiscal institutions are weak and unequipped to deal with the complexities of an oil-dominated budget, which has made the Iraqi economy extremely vulnerable to a sudden decline in oil prices. State-owned enterprises dominate the financial and non-financial sectors and enjoy significant privileges, thus crowding out private firms and impeding factor reallocation. Yet only one quarter of all state-owned enterprises are profitable. The costs of environmental degradation, particularly the degradation of water resources, are huge, amounting to over 6 percent of gross domestic product in recent years.[15] The Government's capacity to respond to the multiple challenges it faces falls short of what is needed. Corruption remains a challenge: in 2013 Iraq ranked 171 of 176 countries on the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index and in 2018 it ranked 168 of 180 countries;[16] and devolution of powers remains a complex matter as there was a centralized administration for many years. However, there were peaceful elections in May 2018 and while the independence referendum in the Kurdistan Regional Government did nothing to advance Kurdish political ambitions, it has made both sides more willing to work together; for example, there are now more Kurdish members of parliament than before.

1.3 UNDP programme under review

UNDP has been present in Iraq since 1976, when the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement was signed. Since 2003, UNDP has operated as part of the United Nations assistance strategy coordinated by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which was established at the request of the Government of Iraq via Security Council resolution 1500 (2003).

The second National Development Plan covering the period 2013-2017 was supposed to provide the guiding framework for the implementation of the UNDAF in Iraq for the period 2015-2019. However, in response to the ongoing crisis, in June 2015, a Humanitarian Response Plan, which superseded the UNDAF,[17] had to be developed by the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team. The crisis had by then displaced 2.9 million people. As of 2018, Iraq has been launching new planning documents which respond to the current post-liberation needs for stabilization, poverty reduction and long-term development. In response, in January 2018, the United Nations system developed a two-year Recovery and Resilience Programme.

FIGURE 1. Evolution of programme budget and expenditure

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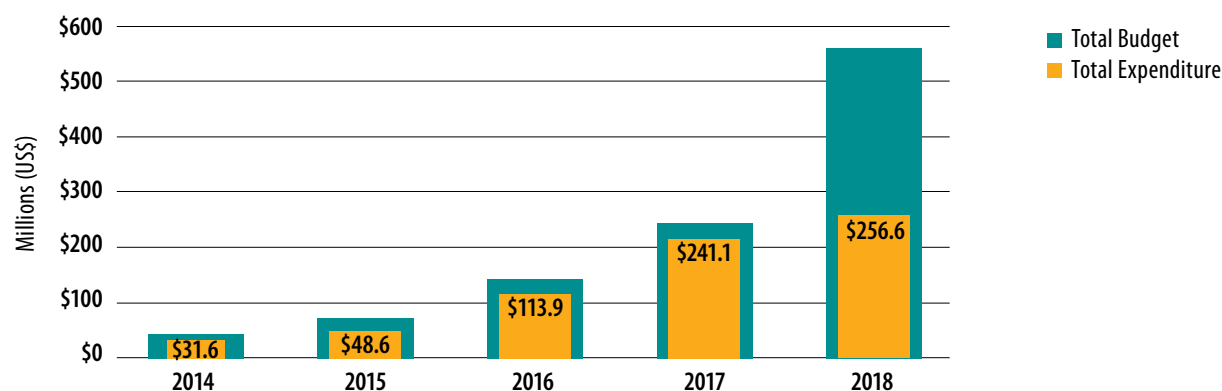
15   Iraq Systemic Country Diagnostic, World Bank, 2017.
16   https://www.transparency.org/country/IRQ.
17   The UNDAF was never formally modified, but there is consensus that it was never used as a programmatic tool.

The country programme was intended to cover three areas: public institutional reform (outcome 6a); effective devolution of administrative and fiscal powers (outcome 7a); and stabilization (outcome 8a). However, it did not anticipate the ISIL crisis (see 1.2) and the scale and significance of the stabilization work. It included a budget of approximately $100 million for outcome 8a, while the contributions mobilized (signed agreements) as of 27 November 2018 stood at $919,198,058. In three years of implementation, the actual budget represented 400 percent ($942 million) of the planned resources ($235.6 million) for the entire country programme cycle, and 248 percent ($584 million) of expenditure.

FIGURE 2. Programme expenditure by source
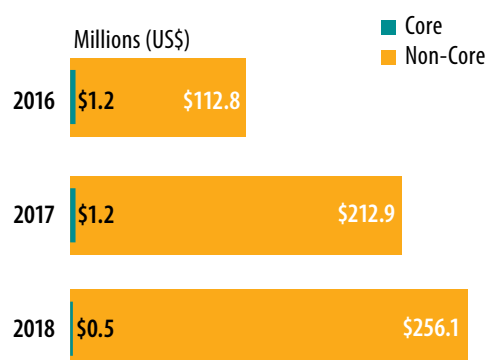
The CPD was not updated. A management consulting team (MCT) mission took place in April 2017 to review the programme and the structure of the country office. This review proposed the creation of a new programme structure which included four pillars: stabilization; economic diversification and employment; governance and reconciliation; and environment and energy.[18] This was operationalized

in November 2018.[19] While not specifically incorporated in the CPD or in the MCT-proposed structure, UNDP also took up the role of cluster coordination for emergency livelihoods and social cohesion.[20] As the CPD did not provide an adequate guiding framework and was never updated, and the office is adopting the pillar structure, this evaluation follows the latter, in order to facilitate a forward-looking analysis and includes the UNDP role in cluster coordination.

The contribution of UNDP resources to the programme portfolio was very small. Because of the crisis situation, direct implementation modality (DIM) was prioritized against national Implementation modality (NIM), as depicted below. Of 73 projects, 71 were implemented through DIM from 2016 to 2018. The two projects implemented by NIM accounted for less than $1 million spent in 2017 ($790,000) and 2018 ($610,000).

1.4 Methodology and limitations

Methodology. The evaluation was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards[21] and the ethical Code of Conduct.[22] A theory of change approach was used in consultation with the UNDP country office, focusing on mapping the assumptions behind the programme's desired change(s) and the causal linkages between the intervention(s) and the intended outcomes.

The first question (see Box 1) addressed the effectiveness of UNDP in achieving its "specific areas of contribution" as well as any programme objectives adjusted over time. The second question focuses on the relevance of strategic choices made by UNDP during the cycle to strengthen its programme effectiveness and respond to the needs of the country, both at central and regional levels, during the period. To better understand the performance

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[18] "Aligning the office to the current and future needs of Iraq", UNDP, May 2017.

[19] "UNDP Iraq [Country Office] Transition Process", UNDP Iraq, November 2018.

[20] UNDP normally leads the Early Recovery Cluster as a contribution to common humanitarian services, however in the case of Iraq, the UNCT agreed to have the Emergency Livelihoods and Social Cohesion Cluster. The focus shifted in 2017 and the cluster became the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster.

[21] http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21

[22] www.uneval.org

of UNDP, the specific factors that have influenced that performance – positively or negatively – and the sustainability of results were examined.

Areas of particular attention included the programming strategies and the extent to which management decisions on the prioritization of stabilization led to the implementation of a coherent and coordinated programme responding to the needs of the country. The evaluation also focused on the role of partnerships, the extent of coordination and joint delivery with other United Nations agencies and UNAMI and the extent to which the key principles of the UNDP Strategic Plan[23] have been applied. The results of this ICPE are also intended to provide evidence for the thematic evaluation of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) through an assessment of the UNDP response to the Syrian refugee crisis and implementation of the 3RP in Iraq (Annex 9).

Special attention was given to integrate a gender-responsive evaluation approach to data-collection methods. To assess gender across the portfolio, the evaluation considered the UNDP gender marker[24] and the IEO gender results effectiveness scale. The latter classifies gender results into five categories: gender-negative; gender-blind; gender-targeted; gender-responsive; and gender-transformative.

For the analysis of results by subject area, an illustrative sample of interventions was selected reflecting the work of UNDP during the period 2015-2018. As the evaluation is outcome-driven and not a sum of project evaluations, all key stakeholders, regardless of the sample of projects, were consulted.

The evaluation used data from primary and secondary sources, including a portfolio analyses, desk review of corporate and project documentation and questionnaires. A multi-stakeholder approach was followed, collecting views from a diverse range of stakeholders on the UNDP performance and contributions at the national level. Face-to-face and telephone/Skype interviews were conducted with approximately 200 people, including government representatives and representatives of civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, bilateral donors, the UNDP country office, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States and beneficiaries of the programme. Data and information collected from different sources and through various means were triangulated before the evaluation reached conclusions and recommendations. The evaluation mission covered Baghdad and Erbil with field visits to Fallujah, Karbala, Mosul, Erbil governorate and Dahuk, to interview local government authorities and beneficiaries and undertake direct observation of project sites.

Limitations. The evaluation faced the following limitations: (1) security constraints and stakeholder availability: several project sites can only be reached in armoured vehicles with strict security requirements, and national evaluators are also limited in their ability to reach sites and consult with beneficiaries due to security and ethnic considerations; (2) very limited availability of evaluation evidence: one decentralized evaluation was completed in March 2019. The only other available evaluation evidence included a midterm review and a UNDP-commissioned review which did not include site visits; and (3) limited time, resources and security concerns did not allow for a statistically meaningful verification of the level of implementation of large projects, especially in the case of the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS).[25] In this case, the evaluation relied on donor-commissioned third-party monitoring, available documentation and interviews, supplemented by five field visits.

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23 These principles include: national ownership and capacity; human rights-based approach; sustainable human development; gender equality and women's empowerment; voice and participation; South-South and triangular cooperation; active role as global citizens; and universality.

24 A corporate tool to sensitize programme managers in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment by assigning ratings to projects during their design phase to indicate the level of expected contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment. It can also be used to track planned programme expenditures on this area (not actual expenditures).

25 As of 1 April 2019, the total number of completed and ongoing projects is 3,159 for a total amount of $1,273,781,107, according to the FFS monitoring files.

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS

Assessment of UNDP contributions

This chapter presents the results of outcome analysis, organized by pillar. As financial data could not always be structured by pillar, it should be noted that outcomes 6a and 7a cover the second (economic diversification and employment), third (governance and reconciliation) and fourth pillars (environment and energy), while outcome 8a corresponds to pillar 1, stabilization. This chapter discusses the progress made in achieving the programme objectives, taking into account the change in programming priorities (see section 1.3). Also included are an assessment of the UNDP contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment, support to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the role of partnerships and innovation.

2.1 Stabilization

Context and relevance to national priorities. The stabilization pillar is the UNDP contribution to the needs of the country during and after the conflict with ISIL (see section 1.2). The two main projects contributing to the pillar are: (1) the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP); and (2) the FFS.

The ICRRP was conceived as a holistic stabilization programme that would address short-term needs and evolve into the medium term with a focus on resilience-building, in recognition of the protracted nature crisis in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It was developed following the deployment of a surge team in 2014 and targeted IDPs, Syrian refugees and host communities, and supported the Government with institutional capacity to respond to crises.[26]

The ICRRP was well aligned with the needs of Iraq, the Government's national development plans and the Kurdistan Regional Government's Vision 2020. It recognized the need for rehabilitation of infrastructure damaged through decades of conflict and the more recent ISIL insurgency. It addressed livelihoods and the need for employment opportunities and for a shift from public sector employment to private sector and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It is therefore also in line with the Private Sector Development Strategy 2014-2030 and the Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty in Iraq 2018-2022.

The UNDP Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS) was established in June 2015 with the aim of helping the Government and the coalition to rapidly stabilize areas liberated from ISIL (Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah ad Din), also referred to as newly liberated areas. The Government originally asked the World Bank to play this role, but after months of delay due to a number of reasons, the Government and the coalition requested UNDP to establish a mechanism to rapidly stabilize areas liberated from ISIL. It specifically asked that the FFIS be designed to work for short periods on priorities identified by the Provincial Command Cell, the body in each governorate responsible for stabilization. The Government also insisted that the FFIS operate as a "single provider" rather than as a multi-partner trust fund to ensure speed and low cost.[27]

To ensure rapid delivery, the FFS was originally designed to last just one year in each of the newly liberated areas. In view of the massive reconstruction and other needs (see section 1.2), the FFS was then subdivided into two windows, one for

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[26] The ICRRP had five components with respective outputs. These were: output 1: crisis response coordination, management, structures and mechanisms implemented and institutionalized; output 2: improved participatory decentralized basic service delivery, institutional responsiveness and accountability; output 3: displaced population groups and crisis-affected (host) communities benefit from livelihoods stabilization and sustainable livelihood opportunities; output 4: protection mechanisms strengthened for vulnerable communities, specifically women and youth; and output 5: strengthened social cohesion through dialogue and capacity development of local and national stakeholders.

[27] There are two reasons for emphasis on speed and a "single provider" modality: (1) there is always an economic, social and political vacuum in the immediate post-conflict space that must be filled if conflict is to be prevented and a peace process is to have a chance of success and; and (2) experience elsewhere had shown that an initial coordinated intervention with the involvement of multiple partners responsible for individual components not only resulted in significant delays, but also compromised the attention required to manage complex programmes operating under conditions of heightened risk and fragility.

"immediate" and the other for "extended" stabilization.[28] The FFS was designed with explicit political objectives in mind: (1) to create conditions for the spontaneous return of IDPs to their areas of origin by restoring basic services and essential infrastructure to their situation prior to the conflict with ISIL, and by stimulating economic activity; and (2) to restore confidence in local authorities and support for the overall peace process. The demonstrated ability of the FFS to deliver on its political objectives has garnered it the considerable accolades and support that it enjoys with the coalition and with the Government of Iraq.

Relevance to the UNDP and UNAMI mandates. The stabilization pillar is clearly aligned to outcome 6 of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in post-conflict and post-disaster settings.[29] It is also a response to the UNAMI mandate. In resolution 2233 (2015), the Security Council[30] extended the mandate of UNAMI for one year as ISIL was expanding and called on UNAMI to: "take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of affected civilians, including children, women and members of religious and ethnic minority groups, and …. *create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons or local integration of internally displaced persons, particularly in areas newly-liberated from ISIL, and to promote stabilization activities and long-term sustainable development, welcoming commitments and encouraging continued efforts of the Government of Iraq for the relief of internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees …".* [Emphasis added]

In resolution 2421 (2018),[31] the Security Council extended the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2019 and updated its role, calling on it to support and assist among other things, *"the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safe, orderly, and voluntary return, as appropriate, of refugees and displaced persons, including through the efforts of the United Nations Country Team; and the coordination and implementation of programmes to improve Iraq's capacity to provide effective civil, social and essential services for its people and continue active donor coordination of critical reconstruction and assistance programmes".* [Emphasis added] Per the same resolution, United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes are to support the objectives outlined in the resolution under the unified leadership of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, supported by the designated Deputy Special Representative.

Financial overview. The total budget for the stabilization pillar over the period 2016-2018 amounts to $874,814,199, including $747,622,781 allocated to the FFS and $115,600,252 to the ICRRP. Updated figures for the two main projects are presented below (see also section 2.5 for details on the evolution of the country portfolio and section 1.3. for an overview).

Gender overview. The interventions under the pillar range from targeted to transformative, with the ICRRP distinguishing its level of contribution output by output. Under this pillar, UNDP has provided emergency livelihood support to women to enhance their economic empowerment through cash-for-work and business-restoring initiatives. UNDP also supported the rehabilitation

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28   The FFIS, initiated in 2015, relies on four primary sets of activities (referred to as "Windows") to positively influence immediate change in the newly liberated areas in Iraq. This includes: Window One: Public works and light infrastructure rehabilitation; Window Two: Immediate livelihood support for returning IDPs; Window Three: Capacity support for local governments, boosting their immediate response capacity to cope with the challenges arising during stabilization; and Window Four: Promoting social cohesion among the target communities. The Funding Facility for Expanded Stabilization (FFES), introduced in April 2016, is a fast-track instrument, but the distinctive role of the FFES lies in its concentration on medium- to large-scale infrastructure projects such as bridges, major power plants and power distribution lines, and – reflecting the crucial importance for IDPs of education and health care – the rehabilitation of universities and hospitals.

29   Section 1.2 discusses the limited relevance of the UNDAF 2015-2019, but it is worth noting that the pillar is relevant to its outcome 3 on improving the conditions for the safe return of IDPs in newly liberated areas.

30   S/RES/2233 (2015).

31   S/RES/2421 (2018).

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of education, health and housing infrastructures which improved women's access to education, health care and decent housing and provided protection through legal redress against sexual and gender-based violence and through community-based reconciliation activities. Specific examples and evidence are provided in the findings section.

Partners and donors. The partnerships forged by the stabilization pillar with institutional counterparts to ensure delivery are key to the results achieved and they range from regional to national level. The ICRRP was implemented in partnership with national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government. Both

the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government were involved in the development of a crisis response capacity through the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Centre (JCMC) and Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC) structures as well as the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and newly liberated areas. The NGOs were mainly engaged in the livelihoods and social cohesions components of the project. In addition, academic institutions such as the University of Baghdad and others were engaged in peace education activities. Details on FFS partners and structure can be found in finding 6. A discussion on the role of partnerships within the United Nations system is presented in finding 7.

TABLE 1. Donor contributions to the FFS and ICRRP as of February 2019

Donor country	FFS agreement in US$[32]	ICRRP budget (2016-2018)[33]
Germany	311,743,055	$71,957,422.64
United States of America	258,300,000	-
European Union	73,341,241	-
The Netherlands	65,482,487	-
United Arab Emirates	60,000,000	-
Denmark	38,185,365	-
Norway	36,116,822	-
United Kingdom	33,513,898	$4,473,048
Sweden	31,441,975	-
Japan	29,128,580	$34,498,373.84
Australia	17,488,223	-
Republic of Korea	14,000,000	-
Italy	13,786,571	-
Canada	10,463,896	-
Finland	9,941,184	-
Belgium	8,635,062	-
Austria	6,697,027	$2,266,768
France	6,234,739	$1,007,075

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[32] Data from the country office as of 25 February 2019. Most contributions were not earmarked, which contributed to the ability of the FFS to deliver at speed and where it was most needed.

[33] Data from UNDP Atlas System as of February 2019.

TABLE 1 (cont'd)

Donor country	FFS agreement in US$	ICRRP budget (2016-2018)
New Zealand	2,000,000	-
Kuwait	2,000,000	$1,175,791
Poland	1,888,330	-
Czech Republic	1,305,639	-
Turkey	750,000	-
Bulgaria	227,273	-
Slovak Republic	56,243	-
Malta	34,286	-
Estonia	29,412	-
	$1,032,791,308	$115,378,478.48

Finding 1. As the principal vehicle of the Government and the international community for the delivery of immediate post-conflict development assistance in the newly liberated areas, the FFS has been hailed as a considerable success, delivering very significant results in a highly risky environment to a high standard and to a very large population, achieving its intended political objectives in large measure by facilitating the spontaneous return of displaced populations. As such, it has also served to create a clear niche for UNDP in such settings that could be replicated both elsewhere in Iraq, in the Arab States region and perhaps globally.

As of February 2019, a total of approximately 4.2 million displaced people had spontaneously returned to their places of origin[34] in the newly liberated areas. Nearly all families (95 percent, 4,008,840 individuals) have returned to a habitual residence that is in a good condition and 2 percent (72,378) are living in other private settings (host families and rented accommodation). However, 3 percent of returnees (130,764) are living in the most vulnerable conditions: critical shelters.[35] Of those living in critical shelters, 85 percent are in three governorates:

41 per cent in Ninawa (53,784), 24 per cent in Salah ad Din (30,864) and 20 per cent in Diyala (25,878). The top three districts hosting returnees living in a critical shelter are Mosul (29,520), Tikrit (12,714) and Khanaqin (11,016).

The FFS had been the principal channel of funding for stabilization in newly liberated areas. If one assumes that the work done by the FFS had been the principal factor contributing to the return of between 80 percent and 100 percent of the returnees under the FFS, with $449,390,546 total expenditure under the FFS by end-February 2019, it can be said that the average cost per returnee ranges from $127 to $106.[36] The Government had not, until 2018, had an investment budget. As a result, it is fair to say that most of the rehabilitation has been due to FFS working with local authorities, with the exception of reconstruction work carried out by other agencies and by UNDP through ICRRP.[37]

Interviews conducted by the ICPE team with donors and the Government were all extremely positive. One major donor unreservedly called the FFS "the

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[34]   IOM statistics; 4,165,320 had returned spontaneously as of February 2019, and 1,802,832 remained displaced.

[35]   Source IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix Database, March 2019. (http://iraqdtm.iom.int/Downloads/DTM%202019/February%202019/Round108_Report_English_2019_February_IOM_DTM.pdf)

[36]   This is presented for illustrative purposes only and should not be regarded as a rigorously calculated figure. It gives an indication of the scale of the FFS cost per returnee.

[37]   The evaluation team notes that, for example, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme is contributing to the rehabilitation of Bab Sinjar and Zanjili in West Mosul and a number of NGOs are active in Bartella. While these efforts are recognized, their scale remains limited. According to interviews, their speed is also slower, due mostly to operational arrangements.

FIGURE 3. Number of returnees by governorate as of March 2019 (Source: IOM, Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix Database)
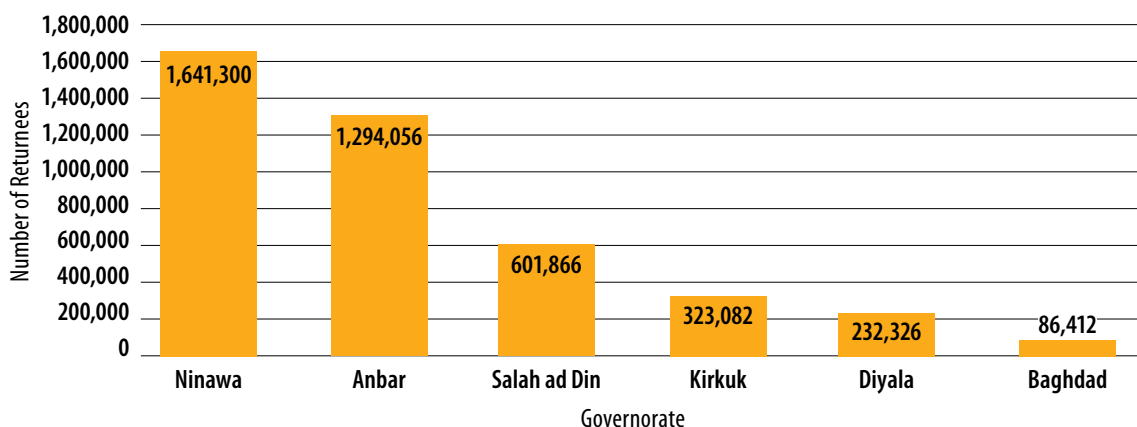
FIGURE 4. Total number of ongoing and completed projects by sector as of March 2019 (Source: FFS Service Centre)

GRAND TOTAL PROJECTS: 2,146

Total Projects Completed: 1,643
Total Projects Ongoing: 503
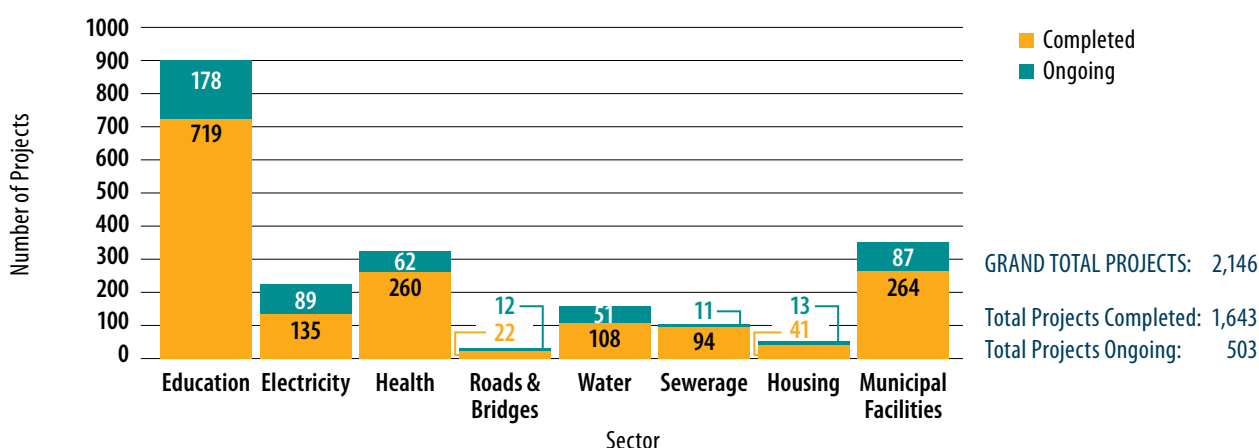
best post-conflict project in the world" and a "miracle programme". Several other donors stressed the excellent work done by the FFS and its effective support for the broader political priorities of the coalition as they pertain to the rapid stabilization, return of displaced people to the newly liberated areas and support for the ongoing peace process. Donors in particular indicated that the concrete, measurable results of the FFS rendered it relatively easy to justify contributions in their capitals.

Indeed, that UNDP has achieved a great deal through the FFS in a very short period of time in extremely difficult and often risky circumstances with numerous incidents against its staff, is a testament to the single mindedness and professional management of FFS staff and the Deputy Special Representative of the

Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative, who, because of the central importance of the project to the success of the coalition effort and the success of UNAMI, directly supervised the FFS in a very hands-on manner.

Of the 1,643 infrastructure projects rehabilitated as of 8 February 2019, 719 were schools or university buildings, 135 were in the electricity sector, 260 consisted of clinics, dispensaries and hospitals in the health sector, 22 were economically or socially important roads and bridges, 108 were water treatment or distribution facilities, 94 were sewage collection and treatment facilities, 41 were housing projects and 264 were municipal office buildings for local government.

FIGURE 5. FFS budgets by governorate (US$)
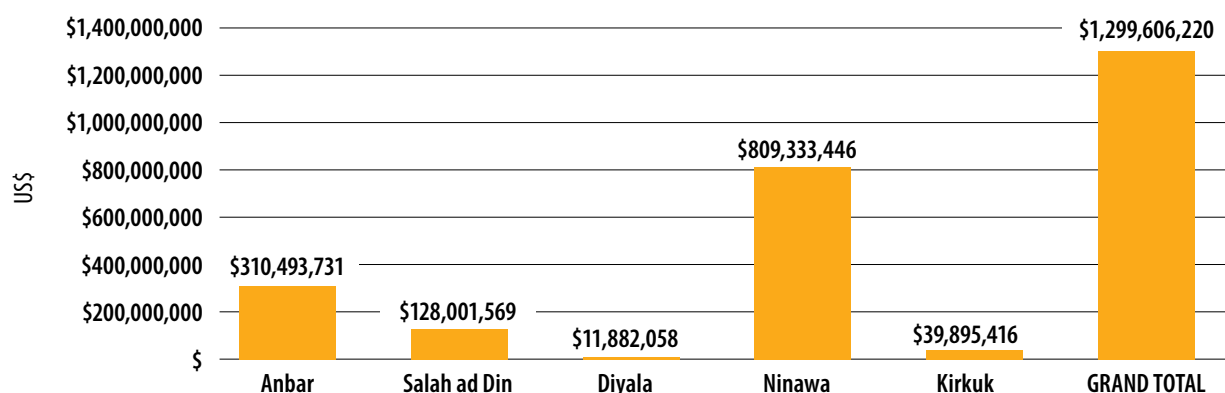
Of the 503 ongoing infrastructure projects, as of 8 February 2019, 178 were in the education sector, 89 in the electricity sector, 62 in health, 12 consisted of roads and bridges, 51 were water treatment or distribution facilities, 11 sewage collection and treatment, 13 housing and 87 municipal office buildings for local government. In addition, under the extended stabilization component of the FFS, 92 medium-sized infrastructure projects have already been implemented and 13 are ongoing.[38] It is worth noting that approximately 62 percent and 24 percent of total budgets have been allocated to Ninawa and Anbar governorates respectively in keeping with political objectives, population density, ethnic and religious distribution and extent of damage.

Finding 2. Although infrastructure and services have been rehabilitated very rapidly and to standard,[39] there are signs that recurrent/operational costs are not always being met by the local and federal authorities, threatening sustainability and raising the possibility of tensions arising with the local community and compromising the FFS objective of raising public confidence in local authorities.

The relative emphasis placed by the FFS on rehabilitating schools, water and housing is in line with opinion surveys conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)[40] to determine what

would induce IDPs to return home. Infrastructure and services have been rapidly rehabilitated and installed to the same specifications in place prior to the conflict on the expectation that funds allocated for their operation and upkeep would already exist in the national budget and would be made available, guaranteeing that services would be delivered in a reliable manner. However, a critical obstacle to success lies in ensuring the sustainability of services and infrastructure rehabilitated. The system of politics and patronage reinforced since 2003 is increasingly reflected in actual allocation of resources at the level of local government, both for recurrent/operational costs and for capital investment. The result is that infrastructure and services that were covered by the national budget prior to the conflict with ISIL are often being starved of resources, undermining reasonable assumptions made by the FFS and putting the sustainability of services and infrastructure rehabilitated by the FFS in some jeopardy.

This was quite visible during the visits by the ICPE team. In Fallujah, for instance, schools rehabilitated by the FFS with good-quality classrooms, furniture, whiteboards, bathrooms, water filtration systems, air-conditioning, lighting, etc., were operating in two to three shifts daily to accommodate the number of children in the area. However, they were

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38   Data obtained from FFS team, verified during interviews to the extent possible and through third-party monitoring.

39   As seen during field visits and as extensively monitored by third parties; for limitations see section 1.

40   IOM, Reasons to Remain: Categorizing Protracted Displacement in Iraq, IOM November 2018, pp. 12-16.

struggling with between and 60 and 75 percent of their teachers working without contracts and without pay. Some of the unpaid teachers were new graduates while many had worked for five years or more without pay. One teacher interviewed said that he had been working for 15 years without pay in the hope of landing a government contract. One of the two elementary schools visited by the ICPE team in Fallujah had been fully rehabilitated by FFS, but had been operating for the past three months without electricity because the governorate had failed to install a transformer on the electrical line feeding the school despite repeated requests and remonstrations. Schools were also operating without supplies. Teachers – including those not being paid – were providing the supplies for the children. Community solidarity is strong, local art school students had volunteered their time to paint cheerful pictures on the walls for the students, but the governorate, it was said, was not delivering.

The administration of schools is decentralized to the municipal and governorate levels. While the trust in government was raised as services came on stream with UNDP support, there is an increasing loss of faith in its trustworthiness and reliability since then, undermining one of the key political objectives of the FFS through no fault of its own. In the case of Mosul, the Steering Committee and the management of the FFS have had to work around the governor with an operational coordinator. The governor, who has close ties to a militia, is being sued by private citizens for the misuse of funds in two court cases and has more recently been dismissed from his post by Iraq's Parliament and a warrant issued for his arrest following the sinking of a ferry on the River Tigris.[41]

Finding 3. The availability of safe and liveable housing is a key requirement for the spontaneous return of most displaced persons. In the post-conflict context of Iraq, following sectarian conflict, it presents a particular challenge and requires close attention in the assessment and selection of units to be rehabilitated.

Given the complex issues associated with land ownership, sectarianism and gender in post-conflict Iraq, housing is undoubtedly a hugely sensitive and labour-intensive aspect of the work of FFS, requiring painstaking preparation and monitoring. It is also one of the sectors most likely to lead to conflict at the community level. As such it has come onstream largely as a part of extended stabilization. UNDP/FFS has, according to the chair of the Humanitarian Shelter Cluster, rapidly become one of the largest contributors to rehabilitation of the housing sector in Iraq with a current target of 36,133 units to be rehabilitated and 18,433 already completed. This means that a total of 36,133 families or an estimated 217,000 returnees have been provided with safe housing by UNDP alone.

The approach FFS has developed is based on guidance provided by the Shelter Cluster[42] and draws upon international best practice of housing rehabilitation in post-conflict contexts.[43] Initial selection by FFS is based on the identification of priority neighbourhoods by the mayor's office or local authority. This is followed by on-site validation (often with local leaders) to get a sense of the scale and extent of damage. Validation is also intended to ensure the selection of the neediest neighbourhoods or residential communities. Once neighbourhoods have been selected and agreement is reached on neighbourhood boundaries, the area is divided into blocks and unit-by-unit assessments are made. Two levels of criteria are applied; the first determines the eligibility of the home to be included within

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[41] New York Times, Iraq Ferry Accident Sets Off Political Upheaval in Mosul, by Alissa J. Rubin and Falih Hassan, 24 March 2019.

[42] It should be noted that according to the Shelter Cluster coordinator, FFS did not usually participate in cluster meetings (probably because of time constraints and extensive obligations in the field) but communicates with the her regularly and keeps her fully informed (interview with the Shelter Cluster coordinator on 3 March 2019). Participation currently takes place on an ad hoc basis.

[43] Criteria for housing reconstruction: Homes that have suffered damage up to 60 percent, the homeowner must be present for the assessment and sign off on the bill of quantity; Homes that have endured conflict-related damage only, vulnerability criteria (priority: women-headed household, no member of household currently employed, single-income household with dependents greater than eight persons, household has disabled or ill dependents, house structure is difficult/dangerous to inhabit without urgent repairs).

the programme and the second determines if the homeowner can be considered as particularly vulnerable (women-headed households, households with ill or disabled members, etc.).

During its visit to Mosul, the ICPE team visited two homes; one in the process of being rehabilitated belonging to a young family headed by a woman widowed in the conflict, and the other belonging to a vulnerable low-income family. A third project site involving only rubble removal, using cash-for-work labourers along with heavy equipment, was apparently not subject to the same selective vulnerability criteria and was taking place on an affluent-looking block in the compound of a particularly large house in the Rabia neighbourhood of West Mosul.[44] The local contractor, who was working for FFS on a project of some 15 houses, complained about assisting[45] relatively well-off, often non-resident (as was the case of the property being worked on) families who had the connections to be able to seek and secure compensation from the Government. The contractor was adamant that he had not signed up to work on the homes of the affluent and connected.

While this case may be anecdotal, it is illustrative of the sensitivities associated with the housing sector. It is in this sector that the trade-off and tension between speed of implementation and deliberate assessment is starkest. Local knowledge of the community and the changes that have taken place during the various conflicts since 2003 are most important. Overreliance on local leaders or mukhtars[46] who have their own allegiances can result in choices that are less than optimal and may reinforce divisions in the community despite the best intentions. All indications are that FFS staff are aware of this potential danger. Every effort will need to be made to ensure

that choices are evidence-based and systematic and that sufficient time is devoted to the site and beneficiary selection process.

Finding 4. The FFS has addressed livelihoods directly through short-term cash infusions and local contracting and indirectly through the effects that the rehabilitation of infrastructure and services have on economic activity and exchange.

In keeping with its immediate post-conflict niche and emphasis on immediate relief and recovery, the FFS approach to livelihoods has so far been short-term in its focus, emphasizing infusions of cash to address the needs of the poorest segments of the community. It is also assumed that by rehabilitating economically and strategically important roads and bridges, the local economy will be stimulated. In Anbar, for instance, roads that connect Fallujah with Amman, Jordan and the Syrian border are being completely rehabilitated, enabling large trucks to pass in and out of the city.

The FFS cash-for-work programme alone has resulted in jobs for some 38,800 people,[47] mostly unskilled labourers, among them approximately 4,000 women including from relatively conservative communities, for a total budget of approximately $75 million. Workers are paid approximately $20 per day, which is above market rates for unskilled labour. Cash-for-work was applied primarily to rubble removal and construction work in connection with rehabilitation of infrastructure, housing and services.

Public announcements and advertisements are issued locally in the targeted geographic areas for workers to apply for cash-for-work. Applicants must be at least 18 years old, should be unemployed and should not be on the list of civil servants or be part-time workers with private companies. Only one family member is given the chance to work

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[44]   The FFS works on the assumption that some largely wealthier homes may be included in a given catchment. If they meet the criteria for inclusion in terms of damage needs etc., work may also be carried out on them.

[45]   With rubble removal only.

[46]   Mukhtar means "chosen" in Arabic. A mukhtar is the head of a village or neighbourhood and is usually selected by some consensual process involving a limited election.

[47]   UNDP FFS monitoring system.

on each project to ensure that as many families as possible can benefit. Cash-for-work projects which target the hiring of women have been specifically designed to safely and comfortably accommodate women workers while also encouraging women to move into non-traditional work areas. Workers interviewed by the ICPE team during the site visits[48] all indicated that the work received was the only job that they had received over the past year and in some cases, since their return. All belonged to larger families and their wages provided for more than one person.

The population of Iraq has been accustomed to full employment guarantees by the Government. The FFS has therefore begun rehabilitating badly damaged industrial plants of state-owned enterprises that had large workforces on their payroll. The ICPE team in Mosul visited a garment factory that specialized in producing uniforms for other government institutions and enterprises and had a predominantly female workforce, ensuring that women also receive an income.

Almost all the contracts issued by the FFS are with local companies, ensuring that local labour is contracted and that qualified engineers have an opportunity to receive on-the-job training. Local engineers are also recruited as third-party monitors to check on progress regularly and to ensure a degree of quality control under the supervision of FFS engineers. In Anbar, for instance, the latter have included 27 female engineers who were provided on-the-job training in sound project management. This is the first time that Iraqi women were employed as engineers in some of the more conservative parts of the country and not only as support or administrative staff.[49]

Finding 5. The special management arrangements under which the FFS has operated have been central to its success because they have provided political and military support for the work of FFS and also streamlined and accelerated

administrative and financial procedures to increase efficiency while adding additional measures to mitigate risk and raise accountability.

Overall guidance and political support. A very specific arrangement was established to align the FFS programme with that of the coalition and the Government, thereby providing it with political, military and substantive cover while feeding priorities from the municipal level in each of the newly liberated areas. This mechanism has been of critical importance in ensuring the adequate allocation of resources to the FFS as well as the requisite military and political cover so necessary for successful implementation. More specifically, this mechanism consisted of a Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Secretary-General of the Cabinet and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative, which is the main instrument to provide oversight and political and military legitimacy to the FFS. The committee consisted of representatives of the 79-member Coalition to Degrade and Defeat ISIL, the National Operations Centre, governors of newly liberated areas and the donors. Command cells at the local level identify priority areas and sectors for attention by the FFS in consultation with the local population and FFS staff, and feed them back to the Steering Committee for their endorsement. Command centres are chaired by governors, local leaders and politicians who propose projects on the understanding that are intended to ensure the support of their constituents.

Risk management. One of the principal reasons that donors channel funds through UNDP is because it is prepared to take calculated risks. In Iraq, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative ensured that UNDP was not entering into high-risk programmes without additional, sometimes elaborate, mitigating measures.

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48   The ICPE team interviewed 20 workers during the site visits; the security constraints limited the number of beneficiaries who could be reached. See section 1 on limitations.

49   As confirmed by women engineers employed interviewed by the ICPE team in Anbar.

These include among others joint ownership of the risk, continuous risk assessment, special monitoring arrangements, etc. (See Annex 8 for details.)

Special measures were put in place to minimize the risks posed by corruption, including procedures to protect and prevent the leaking of bidding information including cost estimates, manipulation of the procurement process by contractors, the detection of possible corruption during implementation, the recording and verification of the payment of wages, and in response to the audit recommendations, the hiring and deployment of additional personnel including third-party monitors and additional measures to secure communications on procurement. Additionally, UNDP continually adapts and fine-tunes its procedures to respond to changes in the environment. For example, it has recently adopted procedures to increase its capacity to detect fraud and corruption in cash-for-work projects. These are widely believed to be among the most robust the organization has ever put in place (see Annex 8).

Operational arrangements. UNDP has accorded the country office special delegated authority to raise its level of autonomy and speed of implementation in the areas of procurement, finance, programme implementation and partnership management. These measures and the creation of a dedicated Service Centre, initially devised for the FFS and then tasked with supporting the ICRRP and other projects as well (see section 2.5 on cross-cutting issues, finding 5), ensure speed and transparency (see Annex 8 for details).

Finding 6. The FFS is under direct implementation by UNDP and operates under a single-provider system (see section on context); no other agencies have been actively invited to contribute or to collaborate with the UNDP/FFS. Coordination with other agencies has not been a priority for the FFS. This does not mean that there has been no collaboration with other agencies, but it has been limited to activities where there is a specific technical need.

The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative to all intents and purposes built what has been repeatedly referred to as a "firewall" around the project, preventing participation in cluster meetings[50] or accommodating active collaboration with other agencies in the interest of ensuring rapid and single-minded implementation and achievement of ambitious targets.

For example, a very strong partnership has been created between the FFS team and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). In interviews with UNMAS personnel, it was made clear that UNMAS views UNDP/FFS as its top priority as its work is so central to the success of the UNAMI mandate. The UNMAS demining and clearance priorities are set based on the rehabilitation needs of UNDP/FFS, with regular meetings held weekly to jointly review priorities and progress. UNMAS also responds to emergencies alongside government mine-clearance teams as and when they arise on FFS projects.

This approach to collaboration with partners has in large part been responsible for the considerable achievements and physical outputs of the FFS in a relatively short period of time, despite the burden of added procedures and efforts to mitigate manifold risks associated with the programme. These achievements have been markedly greater than those achieved in stabilization programmes in other countries that have adopted a more coordinated and collaborative effort within the United Nations family, and beyond where joint planning and coordination have resulted in a far

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[50] The FFS team does however monitor the issues being discussed and contributes information to the clusters.

greater lag time before results have become evident and a great deal of time and effort have had to be devoted to the coordination function instead of implementation.[51]

The ICPE team interviewed a number of representatives of the UNCT. With one exception, all of the agency representatives interviewed, including those who expressed serious concerns during the initial phases, acknowledged the impressive achievements of FFS and attributed them, at least to some extent, to its structure which enabled speed. The evaluation also found evidence that the work of the FFS is paving the way for other agencies to now provide specialized support (e.g., the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the rehabilitation of cultural sites).

Finding 7. While initially missing, a public information strategy is being developed and could contribute greatly to raising public awareness of achievements and raising the confidence of the public in local authorities and the peace process as a whole.

During the field visits, it was apparent to the ICPE team that any effort to inform the public of achievements by the Government under the FFS was relatively haphazard and lacked a clear strategy. During much of the programme, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative had sole authority to interact with the media and FFS staff were under strict orders not to interact with the media to ensure consistency in messaging in part because Iraq was still under emergency level 3. A more flexible approach to media outreach was adopted with the arrival of the new Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in mid-2018, enabling preparation of a media strategy and recruitment of a new communications team in 2018. A strategy has established basic objectives and

intended audiences and outlined challenges and opportunities along with performance indicators for the year with a workplan, including deadlines and assigned responsibilities.

Actual public information activities remain rudimentary and as a result, other agencies have taken credit for work done by the FFS by contributing in a small way to a larger rehabilitation effort undertaken by UNDP. For instance, in the garment factory in East Mosul visited by the ICPE team, while UNDP/FFS was rehabilitating the factory as a whole, IOM had rehabilitated one room, funded the refurbishment of old sewing machines that enabled women to begin work on a smaller scale and placed a plaque publicizing its achievement, by implication also taking credit for work on the whole factory.

In the absence of a programme of media outreach, the chance is missed to give credit to local authorities for achievements under the FFS and to reinforce the role that they are playing in the process of recovery. With it goes the opportunity to actively reinforce and build public confidence in local government and in support of one of the key political objectives of the FFS. Recent videos distributed to the media showcase the rehabilitation work being undertaken by UNDP/FFS[52] but need more work to provide balance by highlighting the role of local authorities.

Finding 8. The ICRRP geographical and individual targeting strategies were appropriate and enabled UNDP to appropriately address the needs of IDPs, refugees and host communities. The ICRRP successfully built the capacity of the JCMC (federal) and JCC (Kurdistan Regional Government) to respond to the crisis and delivered significant livelihood results, albeit with some issues of quality. The ICRRP activities on the whole were successful in engaging women in the activities of the programme.

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[51] See Pillay Rajeev and Jan-Jilles van der Hoeven, Stabilization: An Independent Stock-Taking and Possible Elements for a Corporate Approach for UNDP, UNDP/Crisis Response Unit, New York, June 2017.

[52] http://www.rudaw.net/mobile/english/middleeast/iraq/030420191

TABLE 2. ICRPP delivery by output, 2015-2018

ICRRP component	Output	Overall target	Achieved	Percentage achieved	Percentage women
Crisis response	JCMC/JCC staff trained on agreed areas (assessment, coordination, information management)	200	430	215%	N/A
Basic infrastructure	Basic infrastructure	2,000,000	7,928,551* and **	396%	N/A
Livelihoods	Cash-for-work	25,000	20,305	81%	27%
	Asset recovery	7,000	6,992	100%	44%
	Sustainable livelihoods	10,000	10,298	103%	46%
Sexual and gender-based violence and protection	Legal aid	10,000	10,392	104%	80%
	Awareness-raising on sexual and gender-based violence	3,500	5,468	156%	
	Psychosocial support	250	489	196%	89%
Social cohesion	Youth training on peace, prevention of violent extremism	150	162	108%	108
	Religious leaders' training	2,000	2,228	111%	<1%
	Academics' training on peace	55	108	196%	32%
	University students' training on peacebuilding skills, conflict analysis and reconciliation	150	167	111%	111%
	Number of people engaged in community-based activities	1,000	4,655	466%	54%
	Youth volunteers identified to lead activities	50	404	808%	N/A

Cumulative figures Source: Monitoring data from the country office
*Some double counting is possible in this figure.
**2,600,856 direct and indirect beneficiaries in newly liberated areas.

The ICRRP employed both geographical and individual targeting strategies. The geographical targeting of the ICRRP was appropriate. The majority of activities were implemented in areas with high concentrations of IDPs and Syrian refugees, namely the three governorates of Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Activities undertaken by the ICRRP were careful to include members of the host community. In addition, activities were undertaken in Ninawa, Anbar, Diyala, Halabja, Baghdad and Basra, based on identified needs and in coordination with the FFIS in order to ensure that duplication of basic infrastructure support did not take place in newly liberated areas. For example, the livelihoods component of the ICRRP applied different criteria to the different activities, including cash-for-work, asset recovery and replacement, business incubation and vocational training. The emergency livelihoods activity of cash-for-work used a score card[53] developed by the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster to target eligible individuals. In general, key informants deemed the criteria appropriate. Asset recovery/

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53   Emergency Livelihoods Cluster, 2016, Cash for Work Standard Operating Procedures.

replacement targeting criteria were detailed in the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster standard operating procedure (SOP) for asset recovery/replacement 2018. These correctly noted that vulnerability criteria cannot be the only selection criteria due to the nature of the intervention. Business incubation or SME development also used principles for targeting beyond vulnerability criteria, recognizing that vulnerability could not be the only basis for targeting individuals for business development. Interest and willingness to learn, opportunities to utilize such as a marketable skill, together with the relevant basic skills should also be included in the selection criteria considered for vocational training.[54]

ICRRP supported the JCMC and JCC through: the provision of advisory services by placing technical capacity in the JCMC office in Baghdad; providing training on information management, coordination, needs and gaps assessment, management and disaster risk reduction (DRR); and development of crisis response SOPs for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.[55] A post-training learning impact assessment[56] found that 86 percent (n=20) of respondents found the trainings relevant to their job. In addition, 90 percent (n=20) of respondents were able to apply the newly gained skills in their jobs and 95 percent (n=20) were able to apply the newly gained knowledge in their jobs. A JCC training impact study[57] stated that training measures have resulted in tangible learning outcomes. They have improved staff self-confidence and ability to work independently.

The outputs of the livelihood component were achieved. For example, UNDP engaged the private sector (e.g., Toyota) for job placement schemes. Due to the success of this partnership, the parent company of Toyota has signed a memorandum of understanding with UNDP to replicate the scheme wherever appropriate. Interviews with business

development trainees in Dahuk also highlighted the fact that a number were placed in local businesses such as a preschool kindergarten and a cosmetics factory. However, issues of quality arose during key informant interviews. Key informants reported that greenhouses supported under asset replacement activities of the ICRRP did not have adequate support.[58] Beneficiaries also reported that their requests were not being listened to or addressed.[59] These issues suggest that beneficiary participation was not adequate in decision-making and that project quality could have been higher.

Where available, gender-disaggregated data (see table 2) suggest that the ICRRP has made good strides in reaching women, given the difficult and complex operating environment in Iraq. The efforts with JCC to institutionalize gender equality resulted in a new policy on gender equality for the Ministry of Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Efforts to target women through cash-for-work encountered problems due to the difficulties in identifying work that was culturally acceptable for women to undertake in Iraq. Efforts to overcome this were made and some successes were achieved.

Finding 9. The ICRRP showed flexibility in addressing needs in newly liberated areas; however, this may have detracted from investment in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Internal coordination with other projects was minimal and in some key cases non-existent. This ultimately reduced the potential for synergies and cross-programme learning. External coordination of the ICRRP both with government and other actors including implementing partners was mixed. Partners appreciated the support and flexibility that UNDP offered. However at a strategic level, UNDP awareness of the activities of key actors was limited and little effort was made for joint planning with United Nations partners.

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54   Emergency Livelihoods Cluster, 2018, Vocational Training.

55   Kurdistan Regional Government, 2018, Standard Operating Procedures for Crisis Response.

56   UNDP, 2018, Learning Impact Assessment, Crisis Management Training Programme.

57   UNDP, 2018, Training Impact Study.

58   A site visit to one such greenhouse revealed that this particular project did not start well, with initial greywater capture being contaminated by black water, limiting the use and sale of production from the greenhouses. This was only recently resolved in 2018.

59   For example, they would have liked to have received different fertilisers instead of the same fertiliser all the time in order to replace different nutrients in the soil. Similarly, they identified the need for different pesticides in order to rotate their use so that pests would not get immunity to the repeated use of the same pesticide.

The ICRRP has shown flexibility by contributing to stabilization efforts in newly liberated areas, complementing the FFIS programme, for example by undertaking some smaller basic infrastructure work and emergency livelihood activities. Given the vast resources of the FFS and its focus on infrastructure and emergency livelihoods, the ICRRP contribution to newly liberated areas could have been more effectively focused on sustainable livelihoods and social cohesion.

Internal coordination across programmes was very weak. Some efforts at operational coordination with FFIS were undertaken out of necessity, to ensure that there was no duplication in newly liberated areas. Very little, if any, sharing of lessons or experiences took place, potentially resulting in inefficiencies, for example in the duplication of operating procedures and templates and tools. There were also lost opportunities for synergies between the ICRRP and the FFIS. For example, the ICRRP could have undertaken the medium- to longer-term livelihood activities such as job placement and SME support, "dovetailing" behind the FFIS infrastructure and emergency livelihood work. This would have provided a more comprehensive stabilization programme and provided coherence across the two main projects that made up the stabilization pillar. Instead, other organizations such as IOM have in some places started to implement these types of more sustainable livelihood approaches.

External coordination of the ICRRP with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government was very good. Governorates participated in the ICRRP Project Board meetings that oversaw implementation. This was much appreciated as were the working relationships which were described as "working as one team" by a key informant. However, with management changes in 2018 this regular contact decreased, particularly from the senior management of the ICRRP (see finding 13).

Conversely, key informants suggested that little if any coordination had taken place with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the recent past. UNHCR was until recently unaware of many of the ICRRP activities in support of refugees. This lack of coordination can be attributed to both UNDP and UNHCR and since the end of 2018 has begun to be remedied with regular meetings.

In addition, ICRRP staff seem unaware of major World Bank investments in infrastructure support and socioeconomic programming that may impact on their programming. This was recently remedied through the development of an aligned strategy on job creation and livelihoods.[60] Furthermore, IOM has a substantial portfolio of similar activities; however, other than the coordination taking place under the Livelihoods Cluster there is little evidence of joint strategizing. This will assume great importance as IOM is the lead agency for the job creation working group under the new UNDAF.

Finding 10. ICRRP management changes in the first quarter of 2018 delayed implementation, resulting in a substantial reduction in expenditure against the budget. This in turn demotivated staff and impacted on relations with external stakeholders. Despite this reduction in expenditure and the overall staff situation, the ICRRP exceeded the target outputs for the programme, suggesting that more ambitious planning could have been undertaken.

The ICRRP had three programme managers in 2018. Key informants suggested that this disruption in management caused delays in implementation. For example, there were delays in the implementation of the JCMC/JCC support and key milestones were not met. The recruitment of a new manager in mid-2018 resulted in a decision to suspend certain programme activities, which in turn resulted in the demotivation of staff and delayed progress in the areas of livelihoods, social cohesion and protection. Programming in basic infrastructure was not impacted during this period. The manager ultimately left the position.

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60   UNDP, 2019, Aligned Strategy on Job Creation and Livelihoods between the World Bank and the United Nations.

While the situation has improved, as of the end of 2018 the ICRRP continued to be headed by an Officer-in-Charge (a.i.). Key informants suggest that despite improvements, visits by management are rare and this has resulted in the perception that management is focused on Erbil. In addition, key informants noted that there have been no visits to some of the governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for some time, even to introduce the new management, suggesting that greater efforts at communication are needed, especially at a time when resources are shrinking and Kurdistan Region of Iraq governorates feel that support is being withdrawn to prioritize newly liberated areas. Additionally, many staff changes occurred in 2018. Key informants suggest that the institutional memory of the ICRRP is very limited due to the staff turnover.

Table 2 provides an overview of some of the key output results achieved against the targets set by the ICRRP programme. It shows that the ICRRP programme, notwithstanding the managerial problems, has in most cases surpassed the output targets the programme has set in all components. This coupled with the low expenditure in 2018 (See Figure 6) suggests that planning could have been more ambitious and, while there is evidence of adjustments having been made to plans in some components, further efforts could have been made to set more ambitious targets.

Finding 11. The long-term sustainability of many of the components of the ICRRP remains precarious and requires a concerted effort in order to ensure the long-term impact of the programme.

The funding for the crisis response management component is ending in March 2019, constraining UNDP efforts to support the JCMC and JCC. However, key informants suggested that continued support is needed in order to ensure that strategic plans can be fully implemented and that sustainability of past investments can be ensured. For example, as reported in evaluation interviews, both JCMC and JCC continue to require capacity-building support.

The sustainability of the basic infrastructure activities was ensured through the contractual obligations of contractors who have the responsibility to repair any fault in infrastructure for one year after the completion of works, at which point government would assume responsibility for maintenance. However, key informants noted that salaries are not currently paid in full due to the financial difficulties of the Government. In addition, the cost and volume of fuel required for electricity generation was noted as unsustainable by authorities. A site visit to a relatively new housing complex on the outskirts of Erbil, where UNDP provided the electricity infrastructure, raised some concerns about the reliance on government planning and investment priorities.

FIGURE 6. ICRRP budget, expenditure and utilization, 2016-2018
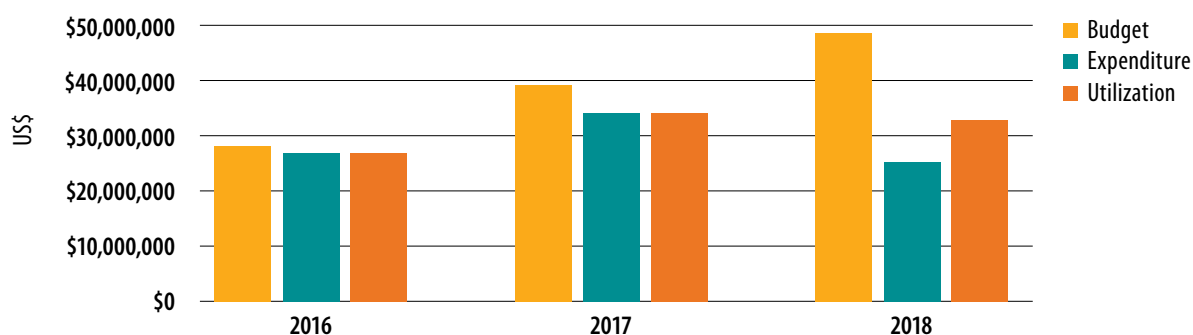
The housing estate was used to relocate poorer households from central Erbil. UNDP was asked to support the installation of electricity infrastructure. This was done to a high standard. However, the governorate had committed to build a school, health centre and the road network, none of which was done. Key informants suggested that this made it more expensive to live in the area since they had to pay for their children's transport to school. While these elements are the responsibility of the governorate, the fact that they have not been fulfilled reduced the effectiveness of UNDP efforts, as highlighted as well by finding 2 (on the FFS).

The current livelihood support provided by UNDP is difficult to scale up and relies on external resources for sustainability. Recently, UNDP has explored different ways in which to undertake livelihoods programming. An example of this is the recent work undertaken with Oxfam in the piloting of savings schemes. The principal activity is the formation of rotational savings and credit associations, with the overall objective to encourage a savings culture among members and discover the dynamics and practices that make the associations work most effectively. While successful, this approach still required external investment through grants, decreasing the likelihood of sustainability.

The abrupt halting of activities due to the suspension of activities by the previous ICRRP manager and the lack of funds could be viewed as an opportunity to test the sustainability of the community centres. Little effort has been made to support centre managers in marketing or resource mobilization capacity, suggesting that the long-term sustainability is in doubt. For example, the centres have many meeting rooms which could potentially be used to raise income for activities. Key informants suggest that the Department for Combating Violence Against Women, a key partner, does not have the budget or capacity to maintain these centres' activities. The Kurani Ainkawa Centre collects a small income from the businesses (barbers and artisanal workers) using the centre's facilities but this is not enough to sustain the centre.

Finding 12. The basic infrastructure component of the ICRRP can operate more efficiently and effectively, but this requires direct contracting and potentially risks losing the implicit capacity development component gained by working through governorate structures.

Different modalities were used to implement the basic infrastructure activities. Implementation in Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah was done through contracts – letters of agreement – with the governorate. The governorate was then in charge of the process for contracting contractors. Payment was based on completed phases, verified by third-party monitors. Key informants suggested that in some cases this process can cause confusion as governorates think that once they have suggested their prioritization, the project will go ahead. In fact, project activities are only approved once a bill of quantity has been submitted and accepted. UNDP area coordinators bear the brunt of this confusion.

In contrast, basic infrastructure activities in Diyala, Baghdad and Salah ad Din were done through direct contracting by UNDP. Key informants reported that UNDP is considering this direct contracting modality for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in order to increase efficiency, however Kurdistan Regional Government representatives have raised concerns.[61]

Finding 13. The FFS social cohesion activities have not yet been launched in a meaningful way. The ICRRP developed a social cohesion strategy in 2015[62] which defined an appropriate two-pronged approach to address social cohesion (community engagement and peace education), with emerging evidence of outcome-level results. However, community engagement activities have been impacted by the management decision to suspend activities in 2018 and the lack of funding.

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[61]   Independent of the modality for basic infrastructure activities, a supervisory committee is set up for each project at governorate level which can sometimes take time, once again reducing efficiency. The committees oversee the specific project in addition to UNDP engineers who undertake spot checks and verification visits to the projects.

[62]   UNDP, Social Cohesion Brief.

In general, the social cohesion component of the FFS, which has been accorded a high priority by some donors, has in practice been relegated to a lower level of priority as the emphasis has been on the rapid delivery of physical rehabilitation work, on the reasonable assumption that issues of social cohesion are often structural in nature and extremely complex and would consume a lot of time and effort on the part of FFS staff, prioritizing instead activities that can have a larger multiplier effect in the early stages of post-conflict stabilization and in a much shorter time frame. Nevertheless, it is noted that 12 local peace committees have been established in the main urban centres in Anbar Governorate without direct FFS support. Composed largely of tribal leaders and elders, the committees are operating effectively, managing conflicts ranging from land and asset ownership disputes to interpersonal conflicts (see 2.3).

Under the ICRRP, community engagement activities included the construction of community centres as a safe place where social cohesion activities could take place. Activities in centres have included sessions on mediation skills, sport and art to bring people together, vocational trainings and a women's football team. Furthermore, psychosocial support was initially provided to support victims of sexual and gender-based violence; men were included later at their request.

A site visit to the Kurani Ainkawa Multipurpose Community Centre identified that the centre used to carry out many activities. However, the centre had not received any financial support since April 2018 and therefore had not done trainings because of the cost of hiring teachers. Similarly, a visit to the Arbat[63] community centre reinforced the finding that the centres do not have many activities taking place. There is evidence[64] that the centre has encouraged communities to engage with each other. Beneficiaries noted that they had made friends with each other through the centre, which allowed people from different backgrounds, including refugees, IDPs and host community members, to mix and women to leave their homes and gather in a safe place. However, funding was halted without ensuring that the centres would have the knowledge and skills to fundraise and support activities (see finding 11).

BOX 2. Key factors contributing to results in the stabilization pillar:

- **National ownership and capacity:** strong coordination with national counterparts at the highest level and with regional governments, coupled with an approach which built on national priorities and available capacities, was key to the success of the stabilization work.

- **Implementation modality:** a single implementer approach ensured fast delivery of results.

- **Operational structure:** accompanied by the measures adopted, it enabled transparency and efficiency.

- **Donor commitment:** support from donors led to the implementation of the largest stabilization programme to date.

- **Limited government resources and investment** in the provision of basic services and the maintenance of infrastructure may compromise the long-term sustainability of results

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63   Arbat Centre has been handed over to the Ministry of Culture. Some activities such as Arabic and English classes take place on a voluntary basis.
64   Evaluation interviews with beneficiaries.

2.2 Economic diversification and employment

The pillar is in the process of being established. It clearly intends to support one of the country's top priorities, as highlighted by all stakeholders met by the evaluation team. It is also in line with the National Development Plan 2018-2022 and the Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty in Iraq 2018-2022. It has the potential to contribute to all three objectives of the UNDP Strategic Plan: eradicating poverty; accelerating transformation for sustainable development; and building resilience to shock and crisis.[65] A strategy is being prepared in line with the aligned strategy on job creation and livelihoods being developed by the United Nations system and the World Bank.

Its current structure is limited to three ongoing projects – one on economic reform,[66] one in which UNDP acts as third-party monitor[67] and one providing electricity support to the Kurdistan Regional Government – and a number of new projects, including the follow-up to the Local Area Development Project (LADP) II[68] and a component on anti-corruption, both formerly part of the governance portfolio (see section on context, 2.3 for details). Due to the ongoing process of establishing the pillar and the current limited portfolio, the evaluation did not develop specific findings for this pillar. The performance of the projects formerly under the governance and reconciliation pillar is discussed in findings 3 and 4, section 2.3. Conclusions and recommendations emerging from the overall analysis and relevant to the pillar are presented in section 3.

2.3 Governance and reconciliation

Context and relevance to national priorities. In Iraq's National Development Plan 2013-2017, the Government aimed to strengthen the public sector, devolve public services and fiscal resources to the provinces, combat corruption and establish an independent judiciary with the objective of protecting human rights.[69] The UNDP CPD 2016-2020 responded by proposing to "support legal and law enforcement institutions at the national level in becoming more transparent and accountable, including implementing the National Security Strategy developed in the previous country programme cycle". The CPD also proposed to support the "effective devolution of administrative and fiscal powers …to support implementation of the Provincial Powers Act (Law 21)…and eliminate multiple tiers of deprivation and promote equitable, balanced service delivery".[70] Similarly, the first priority for Iraq's UNDAF 2015-2019 (see section 1.3 for details of its validity) has been to improve "the performance and responsiveness of targeted national and subnational institutions".[71]

During the period 2012-2016, UNDP governance programming oversaw the management of 12 projects across four governance areas. According to the 2017 MCT review (see section 1.3), the governance and reconciliation pillar originally was expected to include all the initiatives in outcome 6A and a small selection of projects in outcomes 7A and 8A which had previously come under the governance area or were presumed to fit under a governance rubric. They included: (1) strengthening national and subnational public sector institutions, with particular attention to devolution of functions and fiscal resources to the provinces; (2) combating corruption; (3) reinforcing the rule of law including justice

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[65]   UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021.

[66]   The project "Funding Facility for Economic Reform" is split regionally, one operating at federal level and one, currently inactive, operating in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The project was not reviewed in depth by the evaluation.

[67]   "Partnership Services for Support Unit to the Monitoring Committee on the Japanese ODA Loan project (III)", Project document, 2014.

[68]   The local area development II project was formerly housed in the governance pillar, but informally moved to the stabilization pillar. The evaluation team was informed of this change in interviews, but this was never formally recorded, with the project remaining part of outcome 6a throughout its implementation.

[69]   Republic of Iraq, National Development Plan 2013-2017,' Baghdad: Ministry of Planning, January 2013.

[70]   UNDP Country Programme Document for Iraq 2016-2020' (DP/DCP/IRQ/2).

[71]   UNAMI, United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2015-2019, April 2014.

and security institutions; (4) capacitating members and staff of the Council of Representatives; and (5) building local and national mechanisms for reconciling sectarian antagonisms and promoting social cohesion.

Funding for two of the three focus areas of the CPD and the first priority of the UNDAF has been radically reduced in the wake of the UNDP response to the ISIL insurgency. This reduction is partly attributed to the priority given to responding to the crisis and partly attributed to the delay by the country office in resuming its regular programme once the demands from the crisis had lessened. There is furthermore an additional explanation. Projects that were previously part of the governance programming area (and might otherwise have been part of the governance and reconciliation pillar) have been removed to other pillars, presumably in order to make their funds and activities directly available for the crisis response. They are now, following the crisis, arbitrarily situated in the economic diversity and employment pillar. The decentralization of public services, an integral part of the public sector modernization programme in the past, is now found inside the LADP within the economic diversification and employment pillar. A new project to combat corruption has been removed from the governance and reconciliation pillar and made part of the Funding Facility for Economic Reform, also within the economic diversification and employment pillar.

As of 2018, the governance and reconciliation pillar was overseeing only three ongoing donor-funded projects: (1) a modest extension of the Iraq Public Sector Modernization Programme (I-PSM); (2) the Security Sector Reform (SRR) Programme; and (3) a recently approved, modestly funded, integrated reconciliation programme. It is this newly constituted governance and reconciliation pillar that is the subject of evaluation.

Relevance to UNDP mandate. The programme is aligned with one of the long-standing UNDP priorities to support the development of inclusive and effective governance.

Financial overview. Since the large majority of the projects under the governance and reconciliation pillar were originally outcome 6A projects, this evaluation tracks the financial status of the pillar with financial data on outcome 6A. It is not a perfect account of the financial trends for the pillar. It is, however, a close approximation and shows a significant downward trend in expenditure of resources on outcome 6A governance programmes. Expenditures between 2016 and 2018 dropped from $10.5 million in 2016 to $9.7 million in 2017 to $6.9 million in 2018. As a proportion of the total programme, expenditures decreased from 9.2 percent in 2016 to 4.5 percent in 2017 to 2.7 percent in 2018 (Table 3). Declining attention to governance programming, which was a core element of the programme prior to the crisis, has detracted from the strategic positioning of UNDP in this programming area.

TABLE 3. Governance area expenditures, 2016-2018

Year	2016	2017	2018
Amounts (Millions US$)	10.5	9.7	6.9
Proportion of total UNDP programme	9.3%	4.5%	2.7%

Source: Financial Summary Prepared by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office and validated by Iraq country office

Gender overview. The performance of the governance and reconciliation pillar in achieving gender equality is assessed here with reference only to the three remaining programmes that now constitute the governance and reconciliation pillar. The three active projects are ranked either "gender-responsive" or "gender-targeted". Programmes in which gender equality has figured prominently in the past have now been discontinued.

Partners and donors. Institutions and donors partnering with UNDP under the governance and reconciliation pillar are significantly reduced from the governance programme under the previous country programme. The I-PSM programme now works with the Secretariat of the

Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Planning, drawing on UNDAF funds. The integrated reconciliation programme works under the auspices of the Secretariat of the Council of Ministries while maintaining links with the NGO Directorate and the National Reconciliation Committee, financed primarily by the Government of Denmark, with token amounts from the Governments of Germany and the United Kingdom. The SSR programme engages with the Office of the National Security Adviser, the Higher Judicial Council and the Ministry of Justice while being implemented primarily with the Office of the National Security Adviser and Ministry of Interior; funding is provided by the Governments of Denmark, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom.[72]

Finding 1. Rule of law: None of the previously robust UNDP rule of law programme, in place during the previous country programme, is continuing. In its place is a SSR programme which in its current phase of implementation aims at transitioning Iraqi law enforcement from a green (military) to a blue (civilian) force.[73] Its design is commendable while its implementation is unlikely in the medium term. The country office's focus on rule of law has replaced a concern for justice and human rights with an overriding concern for security and law enforcement.

The previous rule of law projects for South/Central Iraq are now without funding, and in their place has emerged the SSR programme. It began in the previous country programme period as a small initiative of less than $1 million. Following a phase II between 2015 and 2017 with a budget of $4.79 million, there is now another two-year project with a budget of $127.97 million. Donors were attracted to this SSR programme to the exclusion of the other rule of law programming as it appeared to directly address sectarian violence and social volatility in the wake of the ISIL insurgency. Other rule of law programmes, such as improving court efficiency, providing legal aid and promoting human rights, appeared less of a priority.

This emerging SSR programme has large ambitions: to reform policing in Iraq and, in the wake of the crisis, specifically to transition the police from a green force adapted to military service to a blue force, committed to civilian service. It also aims to provide "strategic advice" to the Office of the National Security Adviser in the implementation of the SSR programme and to collaborate with the Council of Representatives' Security and Defence Committee in working with civil society on security issues.[74] The programme has been professionally designed with energetic leadership within UNDP and has received diverse donor support. At present, UNDP is the exclusive executor of this programme to be implemented in partnership with the Office of the National Security Adviser and the Ministry of Interior.

The value of the SSR programme can be seen from two different perspectives. The first is positive. This is a needed initiative, however daunting in scope. Agreements have been forged, teams brought in to guide the planning inside the Ministry of Interior and, in collaboration with the Police Affairs Agency in the Ministry of Interior, an innovative police architecture for the country as a whole has been laid out. Preparatory training has just begun. The Local Police Service Road Map,[75] a policy document prepared with the support of the project, covers a diverse array of areas and offers a "road map" for implementation, from new approaches to traffic management to new mechanisms for police investigations in court cases to community policing.

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[72]   These are the only ongoing governance programmes financed by donors. They do not include a small amount from TRAC funds to Iraq's electoral process to help with recent elections, a small amount for the induction of newly elected Council members, a token amount for support for implementation and monitoring of SDGs and a small amount, part of the ICRRP, for treatment of women exposed to violence in IDP camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

[73]   According to the project documents for 2015-2017, 2018 and 2019-2021, the primary objective of the programme is to respond to the long-term security and justice priorities of post-ISIL Iraq. The evaluation has focused on concrete matters in the country office's present programming which merit priority attention.

[74]   There are conflicting views on the extent to which the SSR has fully engaged with Council of Representatives' Security and Defence Committee.

[75]   Republic of Iraq, 'Local Police Service Road Map,' Baghdad: Police Affairs Agency, Ministry of Interior, February 2018.

Another perspective, clearly articulated in a recent evaluation,[76] is that UNDP stands alone as the formulator and executor before a very large edifice of objectives that borders on the unachievable. This evaluation is critical of UNDP for having developed this extensive programme and having marketed it with a small staff within UNDP without adequately reaching out to others (other UNDP colleagues, agencies, NGOs, the Security and Defence Committee in the Council of Representatives) that might serve as valuable partners. While it is acknowledged that the programme makes an effort to reach out to partners, interviews conducted by this evaluation team confirm this view is shared, not only that the challenge of implementation is bigger than the present staff can manage, but also that the programme, as designed in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, will meet many obstacles in its implementation.[77]

The SSR programme as outlined largely neglects areas of critical concern that once were paramount in the governance area. A concern for human rights is tangential to the programme; addressing corruption does not figure at all. The previous rule of law programmes included measures for the protection of women, access to justice through legal aid, improving the efficiency of courts to better process the large backlog of cases and support to human rights commissions in South Central Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. A concern with justice has been largely supplanted by a focus on security and law enforcement.

Regular programming support for legal aid centres, Family Protection Units and the Human Rights Commission in the Kurdistan Regional Government has been discontinued. However, in order to respond to the exceptional needs of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, UNDP has shifted resources to support mobile units providing legal and psychosocial support to families and women in camps and shelters. Data kept by the implementers show that considerable use was made of shelters and, interestingly, the shelters became less necessary as outreach in the camps reduced the incidence of threats. It also shows that greater use was made of the service (number of complaints) once the service became available.

TABLE 4. Access to justice for displaced women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018
No. of women provided shelter	709	270	269	60
No. of women bringing complaints to mobile teams	7,436	6,408	8,970	9,568
No. of women raped	124	115	143	145

Directorate of Violence Against Women yearly data for camps in Erbil, Dahuk, Sulaymaniyah, Garmiyan, Raparin and Soran

Now that the numbers in camps are diminishing, UNDP is withdrawing support for this programme. While this might be an opportune time for UNDP to resume legal and psychological support for women exposed to violence generally in the Kurdistan Region, funding for this has not been made available.

Finding 2. Council of Representatives: Iraq's Council of Representatives is now entering its fourth term. Support has been discontinued. Discontinuing support at this time may be understandable given the Council's growing pains during its first three terms. There are indications, however, that renewed support as UNDP returns to regular programming may have positive results for areas of priority concern to UNDP.

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[76]   Francesca del Mese, 'Evaluation of the Security Sector Reform Programme, August 2015-December 2018', Baghdad: UNDP Iraq, March 2019.

[77]   This view was expressed in interviews with key informants from donors and the Government of Iraq.

The fifth in a succession of projects that have supported the Council of Representatives over a decade ended in 2016.[78] A new project was proposed in 2017 and no donors came forward. Apart from an exceptional grant of $250,000 to provide induction training for new Council members elected in May 2018, UNDP no longer provides support.

Previously, assessments of the Council under support from UNDP and other donors have stressed its inadequacies. The ADR reported in 2014 that the support to the Council of Representatives "achieved far less than expected."[79] A similar view was expressed in the country programme action plan in 2016, reporting that "support to the Council of Representative made very little contribution to its capacity to enhance national dialogue and reconciliation."[80] A European Union review in 2014 reported that the poor performance of the project and the lack of cooperation between the Office of the Speaker and the European Union resulted in a deterioration of relations between the latter and the project steering committee.[81]

The most recent project, covering 2014-2017, has achieved some successes, particular in its support to Council committees. Deliberations within the Reconciliation Committee resulted in the formulation of what is now the integrated reconciliation project. Support to the Civil Society Committee motivated it to support civil society groups in five provinces to sensitize provincial council members on problems faced by minorities in those provinces. The Human Rights Committee drafted a law for the protection of minorities, which is now ready for passage by the newly elected Council.

The most recent, unsuccessful funding proposal was committed to strengthening women's presence in the Council and monitoring the Government's response to the SDGs. The Council of Representatives is potentially well positioned to address these matters that are presently not being addressed in other governance programmes. Furthermore, strengthening the legislative branch of the Government has the potential of providing a counterweight to the over-centralized authority of the executive. Discussions with key respondents[82] in the new elected Council suggest now may be a better time than before for undertaking innovative reforms with some success.

Finding 3. Anti-corruption: Although there are no longer any projects in the governance and reconciliation pillar addressing anti-corruption (see context), this area remains by rights a governance matter. After almost a decade of anti-corruption projects, the incidence of corruption remains largely unchanged. If UNDP is to continue support for anti-corruption, a firm guarantee in the form of political and financial commitments should be a precondition.

During the period 2012-2016, UNDP implemented four anti-corruption projects totalling approximately $14 million. Since 2016, there has been only one which, unlike others in the past, is no longer administered under the governance and reconciliation pillar but rather under the economic diversification and employment pillar. It is discussed here because of its relevance to the performance of anti-corruption as a whole, which by rights is a matter of governance. One of this project's primary objectives has been to create a third and ideally more effective national anti-corruption strategy. The previous two were either never released or too general to implement in any substantive fashion. It is to be seen whether this one will be different. The prevalence of corruption is one of Iraq's most serious liabilities, exacting a substantial cost to the country, limiting public services and rendering any serious reform in the provision of public services very challenging.

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[78] This is an UNDAF Priority A project, Building Capacity and Legitimacy of Institutions and Civil Society, worth $1.79 million.

[79] UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution in Iraq: Assessment of Development Results,' UNDP, 18 February 2014, p. 27.

[80] Ashraf al Shareef & Abhijit Battercharjee, 'Outcome Evaluation of CPAP Outcome 1: Participatory Electoral Processes, National Dialogue and Reconciliation,' UNDP Iraq 30 April 2016, p. 24.

[81] ICF Consulting Service, EU Development Cooperation in Iraq: Final Evaluation, EuropeAid 130146/ Ser IQ, 15 December 2014, p. 24.

[82] Interview with key informant, Council of Representatives, 28 February 2019.

UNDP has used its resources in the past to establish and/or support a number of government bodies charged with tackling corruption from different angles including the Anti-Corruption Academy, the Commission of Integrity, the Bureau of Supreme Audit, the Inspectors General and the High Corruption Council. Interviews with individuals from each of these all frankly admit the impact on corruption has been little or none at all. The change in Iraq's ranking in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index over this period has been negligible. In 2013, Iraq ranked 171 of 176 countries globally and in 2018, it ranked 168 of 180 countries;[83] the Corruption Perceptions Index score changed little from 16 to 18 out of 100. In a 2015 nationwide poll, over three quarters of Iraqi respondents regarded the Government's efforts to curtail corruption as ineffective.[84] A recent government-led assessment of the performance of the Inspectors General, the principal apparatus in the anti-corruption machinery, concluded that the state of instability and unsettled institutional circumstances of their coordinating authority lacked vision and offered poor leadership; furthermore, the work of their staff inside ministries "lacked effectiveness and ability to achieve the required results because their mandate is not clear".[85]

This evaluation was presented with reports that show large numbers of complaints submitted either by the Commission of Integrity or the Inspectors General. They show a much fewer number of cases prepared and handed over to the judiciary. When asked whether sentences were being carried out and whether, therefore, their punishments serve as a deterrence to others, the evidence remains unclear. The conviction rate is relatively low: judicial officials claim that the preparation of cases is poor. Those who prepare the cases claim that once they have prepared the cases for the courts, the matters are out of their hands.

Finding 4. Public sector modernization: Now that one of the central elements in public sector reform – decentralization – has been removed from its moorings inside the governance and reconciliation pillar, the only public sector modernization activity ongoing during the period under review is training civil servants in central ministries and skills development in a small selection of provincial governments. The once extensive public sector modernization programme is to close soon. The performance of efforts to decentralize public services, now implemented within the LADP II and its follow-up phase under the economic diversification and employment pillar, is difficult to assess given the conflicting reports of its performance. Decentralizing public services in Iraq is a critical factor in building greater stability as well as confidence in Iraq's Government, and it is important that it be guided with expertise.

Recent rioting in the southern provinces protesting the Government's failure to provide basic services[86] is an indicator of the Government's neglect of conditions at subnational levels generally. Iraq has traditionally been a centralized State and government leaders in the centre have stubbornly resisted relinquishing power to the provinces. The conditions in the provinces have worsened recently as resources in Baghdad have been diverted to confront the ISIL insurgency, exacerbating Iraq's long-standing neglect. The UNDP I-PSM projects, undertaken initially in 2010 for three years and renewed for a second phase in 2013, have been efforts to increase the effectiveness of the public sector to deliver services to the country as a whole and specifically to embark on decentralization, i.e., devolving administrative responsibilities and fiscal resources to provincial governments for addressing public service needs.

It has been difficult to change Iraq's large and unwieldy public sector. UNDP programmes have supported public sector reforms including recruitment on the basis of merit and transfer of skills for planning public service delivery more effectively. In

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[83]   https://www.transparency.org/country/IRQ
[84]   Transparency International, 'Iraq: Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption,' U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, 2015, p. 7.
[85]   Republic of Iraq, 'Final Evaluation of the Offices of the Inspectors General,' Baghdad: Bureau of Supreme Audit, February 2017, p. 23.
[86]   International Conflict Group, 'How to Cope with Iraq's Summer Brushfire,' Briefing No. 61, 30 July 2018.

the I-PSM second phase, devolution of planning and implementation of public services to the provinces became a singular focus. Extensive training sessions were conducted in provinces in preparation for the ultimate objective of I-PSM to have central government ministries transfer capital investment resources to provincial bodies that were expected after years of training to manage the funds themselves. Progress in decentralizing responsibilities and resources has been slow; however, in spite of a growing number of champions in the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee and in a number of provincial administrations where skills development has gone some way towards preparing them for administering funds locally.

I-PSM II continued its training programmes from 2013 to 2017 at both the national and subnational levels, aimed at increasing the implementation rate of funds that were available to provinces in order to set the stage for the eventual transfer of federal funds to provincial administrations. Project delivery has been stalled in the course of the ISIL insurgency, and two extensions for the I-PSM programme, one in 2018 and one in 2019, have been approved so the project could complete some of its activities. It has been difficult. Table 5 is illustrative. It shows a list of training programmes planned for 2018 and overall no more than 16 percent of them have been completed. Officials of the Council of Ministers Secretariat who have looked forward

to receiving the trainings report hearing from UNDP that the trainings were delayed because of budget shortfalls.

I-PSM II might have been renewed with a fresh project document to carry on with its previous efforts to motivate the Government to finally transfer some fiscal resources from the capital investment budget to the provinces. It was not. Instead, as the I-PSM II programme was in midstream and in the midst of the insurgency, the decentralization component was moved into a livelihoods project, the LADP. This effectively stripped the I-PSM II of one of its main elements.

This new and different phase of the LADP from 2015 to 2018 brought in training scenarios to promote decentralization anew, with a different set of partners, now managed from Erbil. It did not fare particularly well. One of its principal objectives has been to prepare provincial development plans for 12 provinces and indeed some have been done as planned, but some have not. The evaluation team was provided with two letters,[87] each expressing dissatisfaction with the implementation and results. Stakeholders in three of the four governorates outside of the Kurdistan Regional Government contacted by the evaluation said that the plans were either not of the required quality or had not been delivered. Stakeholders interviewed in the Kurdistan Regional Government had

TABLE 5. Activities planned and completed under I-PSM, 2018

Training	Planned	Actual	Completed (%)
Project planning for high-level Council of Ministers Secretariat officials	8	1	12.5
Evaluating the performance of Iraqi institutions	15	3	20
Impact assessments and surveys	8	1	12.5
Total	**31**	**5**	**16**

Source: Interview with Council of Ministers Secretariat, 2 March 2019

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[87] These two letters are appended to this report.

limited knowledge of the intended use of the plans and are awaiting the follow-up phase to progress towards implementation.

A successor project to the most recent LADP programme is now funded and under way.[88] Here too, the principal objective is to reinforce subnational governance capacities in order to pave the way for promoting real transfers from the capital investment budget to provinces. It includes other objectives as well, ambitious and wide-ranging. Among these are infrastructure rehabilitation, job creation, small projects for civil society groups and the creation of a mechanism for coordinating governance funding and programming for the country as a whole. Of particular concern is the project's explicit intention to coordinate the entire UNDP governance programme, its interventions, its funders and its partners. It is not clear why this economic diversity and employment project seeks to fund a management structure for the governance and reconciliation pillar that already exists and performs these functions in the country office.

Finding 5. Social cohesion: The integrated reconciliation programme has shown promise for promoting social cohesion, even though the budget is a small fraction of what was originally envisioned. Local peace committees, established now in 25 districts of four northern provinces, are valued by local residents and leaders for their role in dealing with grievances and mediating disputes where others, notably local political leaders, cannot. The local peace committees need support in the form of: (1) national legitimacy that only Baghdad can provide; and (2) modest financing to support their own work and select peacebuilding activities that will build social cohesion.[89]

The integrated reconciliation programme amalgamates social cohesion initiatives previously undertaken separately by the FFIS and ICRRP. It was launched in 2017 and is scheduled to end in

December 2019 with an anticipated budget of $50 million. It presently operates with a budget of $1.3 million.

A core activity has been to establish local peace committees in the districts of four border provinces: Anbar, Salah ad Din, Diyala and Ninawa. Twenty-five committees have now been put in place by facilitators. Members of these committees have been identified with care. They include distinguished members of their communities and districts, often local leaders or respected professionals representing minorities, religious affiliations or tribes or associations. Young people are represented. Women are represented.[90] Those injured in the conflict are represented as well as those who have caused injury. Facilitators have been careful to identify individuals who eschew political (party) affiliation and it is this, as well as their local esteem, that makes them distinctive and different from other influential individuals associated with political parties.

Their record is positive. In select cases local peace committees have been able to respond to local grievances, solve infrastructural and social problems and promote social cohesion. Where roads are blocked, the committees have used their influence to remove checkpoints.[91] Where disputes arise from refugees returning to reclaim homes, they intervene. Further commitments to the programme will continue to yield peace dividends. These committees have two distinct vulnerabilities, however. They need support in the form of (1) political legitimacy and (2) financial resources, and at the moment they have little of either, only what they can muster locally.

The chain of command that links them to authorities in Baghdad is muddied. There are divergent interests in Baghdad, organizations and committees that seek to profit politically or financially from an involvement in this promising experiment in social

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88   UNDP Iraq, 'Project Document: Supporting Recovery and Stability through Local Development in Iraq,' January 2019.
89   UNAMI also supports a reconciliation programme at national level. The UNDP focus remains at the local level to avoid overlap.
90   Interviews with local peace committee facilitators in Anbar and Ninawa.
91   Evaluation interviews.

cohesion, and political intrigues among them have splintered and weakened national government support. This unclear chain of command detracts from the authority which local peace committees are able to wield in their districts. Committee members are left to reconcile hard feelings arising from long-standing aggression with little more than the force of their reputations; this goes some way but it is not enough. To be effective, they need an unequivocal national mandate and so far, officials in the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers have not provided this.

The local peace committees are doing what many truth commissions have done in other places: resolve disputes, mediate and encourage members of the community and districts to bare unpleasant truths. All this is valuable, but truth commissions in post-conflict areas have demonstrated over the years that the benefits of simple truth-telling and dispute resolution are themselves not enough. Bringing about real social cohesion over the long term needs stronger, more durable incentives. The local peace committees need to be able to offer incentives in the form of small projects or loan mechanisms or other financial considerations for those whose conflicting interests they are aiming to reconcile. They should have a budget that will allow them to finance small-scale peacebuilding

initiatives which, in benefiting the community as a whole, incentivize the community or district to work with them in resolving conflict.

In addition, one cannot really expect the members of the local peace committees to continue their work over the long term without some modest remuneration. Anything less will jeopardize the peacebuilding efforts that UNDP, under the governance and reconciliation pillar, has already undertaken.

Finding 6. Gender: The ongoing programmes were found to contribute to gender equality and mainstreaming in a limited way. Relevant programmes in the past have now been discontinued.

The I-PSM programme's assistance to the Ministry of Planning in formulating the National Development Plan has contributed to promoting women's participation in decision-making in the context of provincial-level training programmes. Apart from this, however, the I-PSM presently does not directly support gender equality in its other public service reform programmes. Programme design for the SSR programme claims to deliver justice irrespective of gender[92] but gender equality is realized only in the training curriculum, not in the selection of course participants or in the reform of the police force. This may be difficult in a programme

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BOX 3. Key factors contributing to results in the governance and reconciliation pillar:

- **National ownership:** Government partners presently view UNDP assistance as a contribution, not as a collaboration. There are many causes and consequences for this, but one in particular is that government partners have little incentive to reform. Requiring government partners to make their own financial commitment builds in a potentially effective incentive.

- **Donor commitment:** While recognizing the importance of long-term governance reform, donors are reluctant to invest more unless there is greater evidence of government buy-in. They are likely to look more favourably on investment in governance reform where the collaboration involves concrete political and financial conditions.

- **Partnerships:** Long-standing partnerships with government institutions, private sector and civil society partners have been important programming assets in the past. Some of these partnerships have had to be temporarily put on hold as UNDP aims to respond to the emergency created by the ISIL insurgency. Others have been strengthened, as in the UNDP SSR programme partnership with the Minister of Interior.

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92   UNDP, 'Project Document, Support to Security Sector,' Phase II, Outcome 3, August 2015.

focused primarily on security. The integrated reconciliation programme places a special emphasis on both women's needs in peacebuilding and their participation in the reconciliation process by specifically addressing issues of sexual violence and by including women in the peacebuilding process. The same is true for the implementation of the mobile legal clinics, which have evolved out of the access to justice programmes (now discontinued) in the Kurdistan Region, and for both the integrated reconciliation and the legal aid mobile clinic projects.

2.4 Environment and energy

Context. Environment and energy was not initially identified as a separate component of the programme under the country programme for 2016-2020. Active projects were allocated, with a certain degree of approximation, mostly to outcome 6A. These involved legal and law enforcement institutions, and they committed UNDP primarily to contributing mostly to policy-level change. Some projects however included demonstration components, for example the project "Catalysing the Use of Solar Photovoltaic Energy" and the provision of equipment as in the case of the "Developing Disaster Risk Management Capacities in Iraq" project. Environment projects tended to combine governance and demonstration and or/pilot activities. In the absence of a dedicated programmatic area, they were "housed" in what seemed the most relevant part of the programme.

Additionally, projects belonging primarily to the governance and reconciliation and stabilization pillars included environmental components. These include: (1) the LADP; and (2) the FFS (see

section 2.1.). These interventions were implemented mostly in isolation and without coordination with the pillar core staff (see section 2.5). Finally, the sixth national report on the Convention on Biological Diversity was prepared through the implementation of a regional project.

Relevance to national priorities. The pillar, although not formally negotiated and agreed upon with government counterparts yet a priority area for UNDP, is aligned to national priorities as described in the National Environmental Strategy 2013-2017,[93] the National Development Plan 2013-2017[94] and the National Development Plan 2018-2022.[95]

Relevance to UNDP mandate. In 2017, in line with Vision 2030 and the National Development Plan, senior management saw the potential to work on SDGs 7, 14 and 15 under a new programme pillar on energy and environment.[96] This was also in line with the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, namely area of work 1, sustainable development pathways.[97] The work to be carried out under the pillar is also aligned to the objective of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 of accelerating structural transformations for sustainable development and in particular, signature solutions 3, enhance national prevention and recovery capacities, and 5, close the energy gap. Finally, it is also now in line with one of the three priorities of the organization, climate change and environment, as announced by the UNDP Administrator in January 2019. As a follow-up to the UNDP audit report, the 2018 UNDP Iraq results-oriented annual report includes a new country programme output (2.6 – "Policies reformed and strategies adopted to promote disaster and

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[93] The strategy covers 10 objectives: protect and improve air quality; protect and improve water quality; reduce land degradation and desertification; preserve coastal and marine environment; conserve sustainable use of biodiversity; development and improvement of waste management; reduction of oil pollution; reduction of radioactive contamination; integrated management of hazardous chemicals; and the development of the institutional and legal framework for the environment sector.

[94] Under the umbrella of initiatives "towards a green economy", it included the following priorities: renewable energy expansion; lowering concentration on non-environmentally friendly resources in oil production; fight desertification and drought; eliminate ozone-depleting substances; expand air quality monitoring; monitoring of sewage waste into the Tigris and Euphrates; monitoring of water resources in Baghdad; replace foam production and refrigerator and freezer production.

[95] It identifies the following major problems: air pollution; water pollution; soil degradation; lack of a plan to protect biodiversity; radioactive pollution.

[96] "UNDP Iraq Transformation Plan: Aligning the office to the current and future needs of Iraq", UNDP Management Consulting Team, May 2017.

[97] Specifically, with the aims of: (1) promoting effective maintenance and protection of natural capital; (2) improving sustainable access to energy; and (3) assessing key environmental risks to the poor and vulnerable. UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

climate-resilient development in Iraq") under outcome 7A in an attempt to capture some of the work done under the newly created pillar.

Financial overview. A total of four main projects were implemented under this pillar between 2016 and 2018. The total budget of the initiatives forming the environment and energy pillar amounts to $11,092,145 and total expenditure as of end of January 2019 stands at $7,835,921. This does not take into account the Iraq component of the regional project and components of projects belonging primarily to other pillars as no breakdown is available. It should be noted that the project "Strengthening Iraq's capacity for water management" was discontinued at the request of the donor and the execution rate is therefore only 8 percent. The overall execution rate stands at 78.97 percent and varies between 68.87 and 80.84 percent for the active projects.[98]

FIGURE 7. Environmental projects, 2016–2018
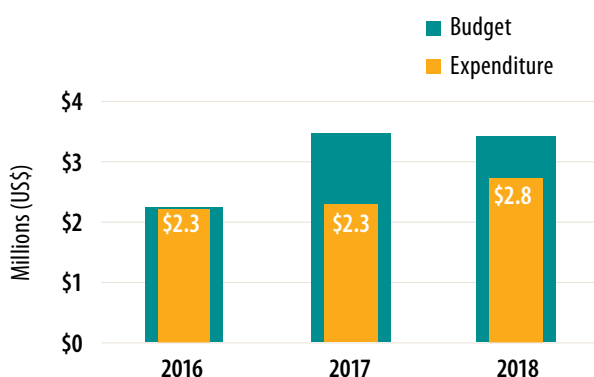
Gender overview. The projects were expected to contribute in a limited way to gender equality (three were rated GEN1 and one GEN0). However, as a separate initiative unrelated to a specific project, with UNDP support, the Ministry of Health and Environment has launched and is coordinating a "Women for Safe and Green Iraq" platform to mainstream gender considerations in DRR and environment and climate change. This is coordinated by a voluntary network of Iraqi women and aims to cover all departments engaged in the thematic areas mentioned above. This platform is now being replicated by other ministries.

Partners and donors. The interventions under the pillar were implemented with several institutional partners both at central government and governorate levels, including the Ministries of Water Resources, Health and Environment, Electricity, Science and Technology, Interior (Civil Defence), the Governorates of Baghdad, Ninawa, Salah ad Din and Najaf and the National Operation Centre under the Prime Minister's Office. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) were the two key United Nations partners and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society also supported the awareness-raising component of one project. Key donors were the United Kingdom Department for International Development, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The LADP II was funded by the European Union and implemented in partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The core environmental interventions (sustainable energy action plans; water, wastewater and waste management plans; cleaning campaigns and tree planting) took place in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk governorates. The key FFS partnership of relevance to this section is the one established with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for the removal and recycling of debris in Mosul. Details of donors and partnerships for the FFS can be found in section 2.1.

Finding 1. The collection of environmental interventions that came to constitute the environment and energy pillar is the result of an attempt to capitalize on existing opportunities at a time of high insecurity and conflict, when most of the attention and support of the country office and donors was directed at the immediate need for stabilization. While the interventions are deemed relevant

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98   "Financial analysis, UNDP Iraq Country programme 2016-2018", UNDP Evaluation Office, February 2019.

to national priorities and there is some evidence of impact, they are not yet comprehensive enough nor are they at the right scale to address pressing environmental needs, to progress from output-level delivery to outcome and impact achievement and to ensure sustainability of results.

The most significant results over the period under review were delivered in the areas of: (1) disaster preparedness; (2) water management; and (c) renewable energy.

Disaster preparedness. Since its construction in the early 1980s, the Mosul Dam has been the largest water reservoir in Iraq. In early 2015, the international scientific community expressed grave concerns about the potential failure of Mosul Dam leading to a tsunami wave 45 metres high and carrying the risk of wiping away the downstream population in Mosul City within two to four hours.[99] The "Developing Disaster Risk Management Capacities in Iraq" project responded to the immediate need to establish an emergency alert and communication system along the Tigris Flood Plains.

Local evacuation and preparedness plans were developed for the three high-risk governorates of Baghdad, Ninawa and Salah ad Din. These were supplemented by an assessment of toxic pollution and explosives along the Tigris River. An emergency alert and communication system was also developed, including a notification protocol, a messaging protocol and public awareness of the alert system. Additionally, equipment was provided to the relevant civil defence departments (32 satellite phones, five Chatty Beetles and six mobile sirens). A simulation was organized by the National

Operation Centre of the Prime Minister's Office in 2018. Finally, actions were taken to raise the public awareness of vulnerable communities, in cooperation with WHO, the Iraqi Red Crescent Society and UNICEF, including for example the development of information and awareness-raising materials, the training of volunteers, child-friendly awareness tools and training for teachers.

The plans are being used by the relevant local governments as guiding documents to maintain a response system, and there is appreciation for their content and quality. There is also appreciation for the equipment provided even though it is currently not entirely in working order.[100] However, as per information provided by the Civil Defence Department in Mosul, the sirens' radius is 7.5 kilometres, not sufficient to cover the entire population at risk and doubts remain on the ability to move them as required.[101] While the trainings (seven in total, 270 male participants, 14 female participants) and the simulation carried out in 2018 have increased the ability of the technical staff and volunteers to respond to a flood,[102] no drill to verify the quality of the response was carried out. Due to logistical and security constraints, the evaluation team could not talk to beneficiaries about the awareness campaigns, nor could the team speak with the current population at risk directly to verify their current level of understanding of the threat and evacuation requirements. However, interviews confirmed that the level of awareness of the population at risk remains a concern for civil defence officials. This is especially the case for returnees who have recently moved back,[103] as confirmed by the focus groups conducted by a third-party monitor.

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[99] "Mosul Dam Emergency Preparedness Programme: Progress report 2016-2017", UNDP Iraq, 2018. The dam was built at a location where the soil foundation was found to be characterized by vast deposits of gypsum, a mineral that dissolves in water. Because of this, cavities that form underneath the dam's base must be constantly filled with grout, a special cement mixture. In 2014, when ISIL wrested control of the dam, grouting operations stopped. Furthermore, skilled technicians were chased out of the area and vital equipment was damaged or frittered away. Further complicating matters, the supply chain for cement needed for the grouting was adversely affected as access to cement factories was constrained due to ISIL occupation.

[100] One of the sirens stationed in Mosul was not functioning at the time of the visit on 5 March 2019.

[101] The evaluation notes that the technical note prepared by Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2016 confirms that six sirens with a 7.5-kilometre radius are not enough to cover the entire population at risk. Additionally, as the population returns, all six may be necessary for Mosul only.

[102] For example, trained volunteers required five and a half hours to reach the affected area during a response trial coordinated by the Iraqi Red Crescent Society in Al-Shirqat district on 11 November 2018.

[103] "Iraq Monitoring and evaluation project site visit report", International Business and Technical Consultants for USAID, February 2019.

A significant portion of the budget ($1,114,419 of $5,875,185) was used or is planned to be used[104] to secure the expertise of international consultants, which raises a long-term sustainability concern. So far there have been no activities to ensure that training and maintenance of the system and equipment could be done directly by the beneficiaries (e.g., replacement of parts, refresher trainings for staff and volunteers on evacuation protocols, etc.). A follow-up project has been approved and intends to strengthen the initial results and ensure long-term sustainability.

Water. Water has become an existential crisis for Iraq. The Tigris and Euphrates are under severe stress, especially in the southern part of the basins in Iraq. Climate change is projected to exacerbate the pressure on water resources and will cause a significant reduction of water flow in the Euphrates and Tigris basins[105] due to changing rainfall pattern and the increase in temperature. In July 2018, protests against inadequate supply of jobs, water and electricity swept across southern Iraq. The protests were particularly violent in Basra where tap water's salinity and pollution caused problems for human health and agriculture.[106]

During 2013-2017, UNDP intended to support the establishment of a national water council and support the development and adoption of a national water law. The project was halted when the law was not passed and the council was never established due to internal political sensitivities and disagreement. The Federal Government has however recently reconsidered the need for a similar, but more appropriate body to facilitate discussions and has established a High Water Committee, which is currently meeting on a regular basis.[107] This

committee is using a draft transboundary water management strategy,[108] developed after a training provided by UNDP at the request of the Minister of Water Resources, in ongoing negotiations with Turkey about dam construction.[109]

Additionally, UNDP prepared an assessment on how to manage the water crisis in Basra in June 2016, which so far has not moved towards implementation with the exception of a small-scale pilot project in Shatt-al Arab, implemented with the Canadian Aid Organization for International Society Rehab.[110]

The most significant achievements in relation to rehabilitating access to water over the period under review were delivered by the FFS (see finding 2).

Renewable energy. Iraq is highly dependent on fossil fuels to generate power. Private diesel power generation has grown significantly to meet the gap. The project titled "Catalysing the Use of Solar Photovoltaic Energy in Iraq" was designed to address the issue of shortages of electricity in Iraq and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It has received a GEF grant of $2,227,000.

According to the midterm review, the six grid-connected solar installations at Bytti provided by the project are fully functional and are connected to the Internet for data storage and online access for all related partners. The utility-scale solar photovoltaic installation at the premises of the Ministry of Health and Environment is also operational. The generation and other parameters from this facility are also being monitored using remotely monitored meters provided by the project. The capacity for solar photovoltaics likely to be created for rooftop applications for homes or small offices is expected to meet the target of five megawatts.

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[104] "Mosul Dam Progress Report 2016-2017", UNDP – last available report.

[105] Iraq's Initial National Communication to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2014.

[106] International Conflict Group, 'How to Cope with Iraq's Summer Brushfire,' Briefing No. 61, 30 July 2018 and "Basra's tap water is too salty and polluted even for washing", The Associated Press, 2 August 2018.

[107] Interviews with Prime Minister Advisers and Ministry of Water Resources representatives.

[108] The strategy has been prepared by the Government but has not been shared with UNDP.

[109] According to Ministry of Water Resources representatives, Turkey plans to build 22 dams which would affect the availability of water resources in Iraq. See also "Why water is a growing Faultline between Turkey and Iraq", Financial Times, 4 July 2018.

[110] "Promoting Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation Services in Shatt el-Arab, Basra, Iraq", UNDP final report, January 2016.

Awareness and building technical capacity for larger uptake of solar photovoltaics have also progressed. The evaluation team confirmed in interviews with representatives of the Ministry of Electricity, Health and Environment and the Prime Minister Advisers that stakeholders are better aware of Iraq's solar energy potential and are initiating, although with some delays and procurement challenges, the installation of solar photovoltaics on the premises of a number of ministries (authorized by the Council of Ministers Secretariat). Based on current functioning and planned installations, the project is deemed on track to achieve the revised target of 160,000 tons of carbon dioxide savings. According to interviews, relevant stakeholders are also in the process of developing a grid code, designing a feed-in tariff, among other measures, to promote investment in the sector, but this is proceeding at a slower pace.

The other UNDP contribution to this area is found in the LADP II, which intended to support the three Kurdistan Region of Iraq governorates – Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah – to develop sustainable energy action plans, intended to optimize the use of energy and natural resources and add value to the economy and fiscal situation. While the plans have been prepared, there is no evidence of implementation yet. The evaluation team understands that this is planned for the next phase, but has noted that important stakeholders in the relevant governorates showed limited or no awareness of the plans so far. For example, senior management of the Dahuk branch of the Ministry of Electricity provided the evaluation team with detailed explanations of all renewable energy-related work ongoing in the region, but was not aware of the sustainable energy action plans or any planned implementation.

Apart from solar energy, other areas for sustainable energy development, particularly wind and biomass, remained largely unexplored but may be very relevant to country's context, and the evaluation noted that there is strong demand for technical support and capacity development from stakeholders both at national and regional levels.

Finding 2. The FFS clearly targets returnees (see section 2.1) and does not monitor environmental indicators. It aims to restore infrastructure to pre-existing conditions and standards. While no specific guidance on the integration of environmental aspects into stabilization is available, the FFS has contributed to the realization of environmental benefits, which have been observed in the areas of upgrading and rehabilitation of systems, reduction in use of unsustainable resources and recycling.

Rehabilitation projects (Window 1) improve access to services and reinstate environmental measures and safeguards associated with the structures. From an environmental perspective, this is predominantly reflected in improved design details relating to drainage, quality of materials used, etc. As of 1 April 2019, the FFS has completed 310 electricity-related projects, 122 sewage projects and 237 water projects.[111] While no data are available, several of these can reasonably be expected to contribute to reduced use of diesel for generators, prevent the run-off of wastewater and reduce the requirements for water trucking, etc. For example, the rehabilitation of Ibn Al Atheer Paediatric Hospital in Mosul is expected to decrease the generator requirements and improve the medical waste management system previously in place.[112] The restoration of the Nimrud water plant enabled UNICEF and municipal water authorities to stop expensive, dangerous and environmentally unfriendly water trucking across East Mosul.[113]

Cash-for-work programmes (Window 2) are focused predominantly on the removal of rubble, but have also started to address the removal and appropriate disposal of trash. In October 2018, a Debris Recycling Deployment Plan was developed with technical assistance from UNEP, aiming to safely

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[111]   "FFS project numbers by sector", UNDP FFS monitoring, 1 April 2019.

[112]   "Social and Environmental Screening - Funding Facility for Stabilization – Expanded Stabilization, Rehabilitation of Ibn Al Atheer Pediatric Hospital in Mosul", UNDP, 2019.

[113]   "Lessons learned study on UN Humanitarian, Civil-Military Coordination and Stabilisation Efforts in Mosul", SREO consulting, January 2019.

recycle the optimum quantity of the debris into the ensuing reconstruction works, leading to significant cost savings as well as reduced waste quantities for disposal and reduced environmental burden from the surrounding quarries. This is currently being piloted, mostly in Mosul, with other activities (e.g., workshops) ongoing in other areas.

BOX 4. Key factors contributing to results in the environment and energy pillar:

- Limited resources available for this area during the height of the crisis. The programme has benefited from the strong partnership established by UNDP Iraq through the stabilization pillar with donors and institutional counterparts, but suffered from limited staff and support from senior management in resource mobilization (see also cross-cutting issues, finding 3);

- Absence of an overall strategic and programmatic approach to the development of the pillar and limited coordination across the country office (see also cross-cutting issues, finding 1);

- Strong relevance and alignment to emerging priorities of the country and UNDP mandate.

2.5 Cross-cutting issues

Finding 1. Programmatic coherence and coordination: while theories of change or at least logical frameworks with clear goals and causal pathways are available for some initiatives (e.g., FFS) and signs of improvement in programmatic coherence and coordination over the last year have been observed, there is a lack of country office-wide strategic and synergetic thinking leading to coherence at both the level of pillar and country programme implementation. Additionally, the office is showing signs of lack of awareness of roles and responsibilities, it has a limited communication flow and even basic information-sharing is not always in place.

Coordination between FFS and ICRRP is discussed in section 2.1, finding 12. As another example, the LADP II project was implemented in isolation from the rest of the programme. Interviews indicated that staff in outposted offices where the programme is active, with one exception in Sulaymaniyah, were not involved. The ICRRP also operated at the same time as the LADP II and there has been no coordination despite some of the activities being similar, for example women's centres for LADP II while ICRRP set up community centres and worked with women and youth as well as victims of sexual and gender-based violence. The environmental components of the projects were not coordinated with the responsible staff of the country office. The proposal development and launch (February 2019) of the new project "Strengthening the Long-Term Resilience of Subnational Authorities in countries affected by the Syrian and Iraqi Crises" took place without coordination with colleagues working in the same geographical area (e.g., Dahuk) and/or on similar issues (e.g., ICRRP, Integrated Reconciliation Programme).

The office has five full-time staff working on gender. This includes a gender focal point who is in charge of implementing the gender action plan and supporting the integration and mainstreaming of gender and women's empowerment both at the programme and project levels. However, only informal ad hoc communication is taking place and there is no formal communication or formal structure (e.g., second reporting line) which ensures programmatic coherence.

Some areas of work, for example the interventions focusing on youth and innovation, managed to develop partnerships with other agencies and external actors, but were not until recently housed in a thematic area with coordination with other country office initiatives targeting similar areas, i.e., in this case, youth and employment in LADP and ICRRP. This specific area is now clearly assigned to the economic diversification and employment pillar, but synergies with the rest of the programme have yet to be identified and used to strengthen implementation. It is expected that this will be covered by the new strategy being prepared for the pillar (see 2.2).

As noted by the MCT review, the evaluation also found that there is no knowledge and information management system. Some staff manage databases not accessible to others. The country office does not hold regular meetings with regard to programme coordination, brainstorming sessions or retreats. When meetings are held, minutes are not always prepared and circulated. There are no regular newsletters or other written material to inform staff of major events or results. In general, the office culture does not incentivize information-sharing. While this is a relatively recent development, the evaluation also notes that there was limited consultation during the development of the pillar structure, and that some staff are unsure as to where their thematic areas fall and which reporting lines are in place.

Finding 2. Sustainable Development Goals: Specific interventions identify, in most cases, the SDG target to which they intend to contribute [114] and are relevant to the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, going forward, it is unclear to what extent UNDP is positioning itself to support Iraq in the achievement of the SDGs as part of a coherent programmatic approach.

For example, UNDP efforts in Iraq under the ICRRP contributed to achieving SDG 1, to end poverty in all its forms, through the provision of livelihood opportunities and employment. In addition, ICRRP work strands on protection of the vulnerable and social cohesion contribute to achieving SDG 5 on gender equality and empowering women and girls through access to legal recourse and protection against sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, ICRRP contributed to the achievement of SDG 8 to promote sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, through different employment opportunities and support to the development of SMEs.

However, it was stressed to the evaluation team by stakeholders that there is a concern regarding the ability of UNDP to take the lead in providing support to the Government on SDG mainstreaming and implementation. After an initial workshop in March 2018, it is the view of stakeholders that capacity is limited and UNDP is not acting as "integrator" or "accelerator" in line with the "Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support" approach and the UNDP vision to "craft country- and context-specific solutions to a range of challenges such as addressing critical bottlenecks and accelerators, supporting Governments to strengthen the alignment of national development plans, budgets and implementation systems with the Sustainable Development Goals".[115] Responsibilities are currently shifting to the office of the Resident Coordinator as a result.

Finding 3. Resource mobilization: Except for stabilization, which has had the full support of the Resident Coordinator, a senior team in place and which has been a recognized priority for institutional counterparts and donors, the level of resource mobilization has been lower than expected. This is the result of a number of factors, including: (1) reprioritization of the programme as a result of the crisis and the immediate need to strengthen the stabilization component; (2) focus of donors on the stabilization programme as an immediate priority; and (3) a concentration of responsibilities on functions which were either not staffed or covering multiple roles, compounded by overall diminished attention to the implementation of programme areas outside stabilization (see findings under sections 2.3 and 2.4).

The importance attached to FFS both by partners and by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative has resulted in virtually the entire UNDP programme being strategically positioned in the immediate post-conflict phase under the rubric of stabilization, with some 90 percent of UNDP resources devoted to the pillar. Almost 90 percent of the contributions of the top 10 donors was directed to the stabilization programme, with only 5.1 percent directed to the rest of the programme. Compared to the planned resources, outcomes 6A

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[114] Information is available on the UNDP intranet, verified by the IEO.
[115] UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021.

and 7A were respectively achieved at 40 and 31 percent, while outcome 8A was achieved at 536 percent, which represented 92 percent of total programme expenditure over the period 2016-2018.

While donors prioritized stabilization, there is evidence that thanks to the work carried out by the stabilization pillar and the FFS in particular, funding was made available to UNDP to work in other areas, e.g., DRR.[116] However, several programmes in other areas either had to be closed at the request of donors (see 2.4) or were discontinued (see 2.3) and no strategic documents have so far been developed[117] to foster the strengthening of programmatic areas outside stabilization, which could have served as a basis for resource mobilization.

Additionally, the resource mobilization function, which was identified by the MCT review as primary responsibility of the Resident Representative and Country Director, has been severely understaffed, with the current Resident Representative a.i. covering the functions of Deputy Country Director-Programme, Deputy Country Director-Operations and Resident Representative, and the previous Resident Representative a.i. also covering both the Country Director and Deputy Country Director-Programme roles. As a result, while several staff managed to mobilize resources, they operated without being formally empowered to do so and with limited support.

Resource mobilization has picked up in the last few months, reaching approximately $75 million for non-stabilization work,[118] but is falling short of the most conservative estimate of $130 million presented in 2017 by senior management during the review process.[119] While several donors indicated their intention to phase out or reduce investment in the country, there is strong support from national counterparts to move towards cost sharing and direct implementation. The 2019 budget includes for the first time in years an allocation of $38 million to investments, with a clear intention to work in partnership with UNDP, and specifically the stabilization team, for implementation.[120]

Finding 4. Gender equality is well mainstreamed in the UNDP programme as well as in the office business environment. The focus is mostly gender-targeted and gender-responsive but not yet gender-transformative.

The UNDP financial commitment towards gender equality during the period 2016-2018 was very high. Eighty-six percent ($500.9 million) of the programme portfolio during the period was directed towards outputs with a significant objective of gender equality and empowerment of women (GEN2). This is mostly due to the gender dimensions incorporated in the stabilization work, which represents over 80 percent of the programme portfolio. Specific examples and evidence of gender-relevant interventions are discussed in sections 2.1 to 2.4 and issues relate to coordination are discussed in finding 1 above.

The country office has developed a gender equality strategy and action plan aligned with the previous (2014-2017) and the current (2018-2021) UNDP Gender Equality Strategy. In terms of gender parity in the country office, women represent 27 percent of the staff but are represented in the senior positions. The recent 2018 Global Services Section report shows that from 2016 to 2018, women felt more engaged (68 percent to 73 percent) and empowered (41 percent to 59 percent) at the country office. The gender team has been growing over the past three years from two staff (one NO-C

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[116]   Evaluation team interviews with donor representatives.

[117]   The first expected strategy is being developed by the second pillar and due at the end of April; see section 2.2.

[118]   Evaluation interview with Resident Representative a.i.

[119]   "UNDP Iraq Transformation Plan: Aligning the office to the current and future needs of Iraq", UNDP Management Consulting Team, May 2017.

[120]   Evaluation interviews with donors and government counterparts.

and one service contract/United Nations Volunteer (UNV)[121] in 2016 to five staff in 2018 (one P-3, one NO-C and three service contract/UNVs).[122]

The country office has also been active in developing gender learning activities to the benefit of staff, with an allocation of 1 percent of the management budget in 2016 and 2017. However, the gender gap is still evident. Fifty-six percent of women are favourable of good leadership and direction at the country office against 71 percent for men. Forty-three percent of women (against 64 percent of men) felt that they have sufficient mechanisms and tools at their disposal to maintain a healthy balance between work-related and personal responsibilities.

FIGURE 8. Expenditure by gender marker and year
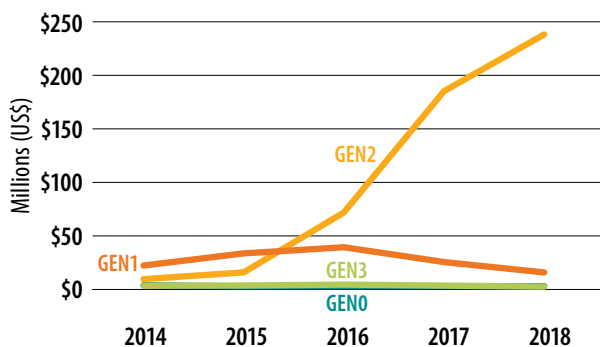
Finding 5. Results-based management: As already highlighted by the audit report,[123] the evaluation found that there are important weaknesses in the application of results-based management.

Additionally, evaluations were not conducted in line with corporate requirements outlined in the Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP) and the decentralized evaluation guidelines.[124] The FFS has a strong monitoring system (Annex 8) and a monitoring system is in place for ICRRP, but the country office as a whole has weak quality assurance, programme management and project oversight, and no monitoring and evaluation capacity, leading to a lack of performance analysis and adaptive management.

Quality assurance, programme management, monitoring and project oversight were recently covered in depth by the audit. Similar challenges had been highlighted by the management review in 2017. This evaluation came to the same conclusions based on spot checks, but did not repeat the same analysis.

As far as evaluation is concerned, the Programme Management Support Unit was split in 2014 into the Programme Unit and the Partnership Management and Support Unit (PMSU). Among other tasks, the Programme Unit was to be responsible for decentralized project evaluations and the PMSU was to be responsible for outcome evaluations. The rationale for the split is not clear. In general, the evaluation found that both units were understaffed and dysfunctional, as highlighted by the management review in 2017.

As a result, only one decentralized evaluation was completed while the ICPE evaluation mission to Iraq was taking place, while four project evaluations and three outcome evaluations had been

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[121] One gender specialist is based in Erbil and the other one in Baghdad.

[122] According to the 2018 results-oriented annual report, "The [country office] has a total of 5 full-time dedicated staff for gender and one of them at the P3 level for Funding Facility for Stabilization) FFS). The [country office] has an experienced gender specialist at the NO-C level as the gender focal point who is in charge of implementing the gender action plan and supporting the integration and mainstreaming of gender and women's empowerment both at the programme and project level. One UNV is supporting the work led by the Gender Specialist. In Erbil office, there is one gender officer at SC level 7 while another gender officer works at that level in the Integrated Reconciliation Project".

[123] "Audit report no 2011", UNDP Iraq, 29 January 2019.

[124] The POPP (para 22 and 23) require that UNDP offices and units must maintain adequate staffing for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). All offices with annual programme expenditures of $50 million and above, excluding expenditures for vertical funds with their own dedicated capacities, such as the GEF, Green Climate Fund and Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, should maintain two full-time specialists dedicated to M&E. Offices with programme expenditures between $10 million and $50 million should maintain one full-time specialist. The decentralized evaluation guidelines being used during the period under review state that UNDP programme units are required to select and commission evaluations that provide substantive information for decision-making. In deciding what to evaluate, the programme units should first determine the purpose of the evaluation and other factors that may influence the relevance and use of proposed evaluations. In general, for accountability purposes, at least 20 percent to 30 percent of the entire programme portfolio should be subject to evaluation. Current guidelines are available here: http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/

foreseen in the revised October 2017 evaluation plan.[125] The only other two reviews carried are the midterm review of the only GEF-funded project implemented by the country office (GEF requirement) and an evaluation commissioned by UNDP of the European Union-funded LADP II project, which did not include site visits. Evaluations of the ICRRP and FFS programmes are scheduled for 2019.

Finding 6. Management efficiency: As well as ensuring transparent project management and expediting procurement, as noted by the audit report,[126] the evaluation observed a high level of management efficiency of the Service Centre and decreasing level of management efficiency in the country office.

When FFS and ICRRP are included in the management efficiency analysis, the results, based on expenditure, show that UNDP has significantly improved its management efficiency during the past five years, moving from a management efficiency ratio of 26 percent in 2014 to 3.3 percent in 2018. If they are not included in the analysis (they are being implemented by a dedicated Service Centre team with specific management costs), management inefficiency in 2018 reached its highest level since 2014.[127]

In 2018, the management efficiency ratio of the Service Centre was 3.82 percent if the analysis considers that it served only FFS and ICRRP. It improves marginally, moving to 3.77 percent if the analysis includes LADP and DRR projects, which were also supported by the Service Centre in 2018.[128]

This second scenario cannot be considered fully accurate and is presented for reflection purposes. It is acknowledged that the country office continued to support the operations of FFS, ICRRP, LADP and DRR throughout the period and it is not possible to exactly quantify the management contribution. For example, at the time of writing, the country office is managing the payroll and payment cycle processes. It also supports some human resource functions like the issuing of United Nations laissez-passers for staff. This support is however understood to have decreased over the years as more functions were progressively taken over by the Service Centre (currently managing information technology (IT),

TABLE 6. Management efficiency over the period 2014-2018

Year	Management expenditure	Programme expenditure	Management efficiency ratio	Programme delivery rate
2014	$7,791,622.02	$29,537,323.32	26.38%	76.25%
2015	$7,043,428.43	$36,848,059.76	19.11%	72.26%
2016	$8,987,616.23	$21,125,247.54	42.54%	70.08%
2017	$7,854,856.55	$19,655,887.29	39.96%	78.43%
2018	$8,421,662.82	$16,113,678.30	52.26%	66.61%
Total	$40,099,186.05	$123,280,196.21	32.53%	72.89%

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[125] A second revision of the evaluation plan was carried in December 2018 and includes one outcome evaluation and three project evaluations, "Iraq Evaluation Plan, revision 2", UNDP Iraq, December 2018.

[126] "Audit report no 2011", UNDP Iraq, 29 January 2019.

[127] A few adjustments were made to management and programme expenditures to ensure the consistency of the analysis. These adjustments consisted of moving the component of management costs incorporated into the programme portfolio to management, and vice versa. In 2016, $145,705.96 was spent on management in the programme portfolio. This amount has been moved from programme into management. In 2018, the programme outcomes 6A and 8A had a small amount ($17,857.89 for outcome 6A and $22,390.39 for outcome 7A in management expenses. This was also moved into programme.

[128] "Financial analysis, UNDP Iraq", Independent Evaluation Office, 2019, discussed and verified with country office operations and Service Centre staff.

human resources, procurement and finance). It should also be noted that the Service Centre has provided support to the country office, for example in the updating of the IT infrastructure.

These relations make it difficult to separate the efficiency rates entirely but do suggest a high level of management efficiency of the Service Centre in relation to the delivery of the FFS, ICRRP, DRR and LADP projects and a decreasing level of management efficiency in the country office for the remaining part of programme implementation. As of January 2019, the Service Centre is providing support to all development projects implemented by the country office.

Finding 7. Emergency Livelihoods Cluster: UNDP did not adequately resource the coordination function and relied on staff goodwill to fulfil its responsibilities despite the potential gains in terms of coordination and standardization. Cluster achievements, under the leadership of the individuals concerned, were remarkable given the lack of investment by UNDP.

UNDP did not provide dedicated resources for its cluster coordination role, with the role being assumed by the specialist for the livelihoods component for the ICCRP. An additional information management support function was recruited later, after advocacy by the programme specialist to senior management. However, this post is currently vacant.

While credit was given by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to the individual who took on this additional responsibility to lead the national cluster and the efforts made to coordinate, it was evident to stakeholders that UNDP did not prioritize this role. Representations were made by OCHA at the highest levels to the UNDP office in Iraq for improved leadership and commitment to the cluster but these have not born fruit and there was a continued concern that UNDP did not have dedicated resources that were delinked from UNDP programmes.

By September-October 2018, the livelihoods focal point was on detailed assignment in New York and a UNV had been made Officer-in-Charge and continues to play that role, along with being the in-country focal point for the livelihoods component of the ICRRP and the focal point for the 3RP Livelihoods Sector Working Group. Key informants reported that placing a UNV in the role of national cluster coordinator has reinforced the perception of key stakeholders of the lack of priority given to the role of cluster coordinator.

Livelihoods is perceived by stakeholders as a key sector, but investment and coverage are not actually high. While coverage of the plans under the Humanitarian Response Plan in 2018 and 2019 improved to 100 percent, the number of beneficiaries targeted fell (see table 7). The total amount of funding was also less than that secured by the Food Security Cluster[129] throughout the period under review. During the evaluation, key informants raised concerns about the development of the new cluster strategy which did not capture the goals of the cluster but was focused on the internal workings of the cluster. In addition, some cluster members reported weaknesses in communication including last-minute communications and lack of clarity in written communication. IOM is now the chair of the Job Creation Working Group under the UNDAF, very possibly as a result of the perceived low importance assigned by UNDP to the coordination of livelihoods efforts.

TABLE 7. Funding allocated to the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster through the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (in millions US$)

Year	Funding allocated	Coverage	Beneficiaries (targeted)
2016	1	-	14,000
2017	1.6	42%	10,000
2018	0.5	100%	1,000
2019	2.5	100%	2,500

Source: Iraq Humanitarian Fund 2016-2019

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129   OCHA, Iraq Humanitarian Fund 2016-2018.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS
AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

This chapter presents the evaluation team's main conclusions on the UNDP performance and contributions to development results in Iraq, its recommendations based on the key findings presented, and the management response from the UNDP country office in Iraq.

3.1 Conclusions

Strategic positioning

1. **UNDP in Iraq has successfully created a model of intervention under the stabilization component to support key political objectives and recovery in the immediate post-conflict space.** UNDP Iraq has demonstrated the importance of retaining programming flexibility in the face of fluidity in the immediate post-conflict setting and of adjusting the programme to address emerging needs. Under the pillar, UNDP is delivering the largest stabilization programme to date with significant results.[130] UNDP is now seen as a highly respected and valued partner, with several opportunities to build on the relations established in the last few years. Even highly vocal critics recognize the value of the work delivered by UNDP. Institutional partners in Iraq are clearly committed to continue working with UNDP and support it directly if possible.

Although the FFS approach to stabilization is partial in that it does not preventively address all of the structural, root causes of potential conflict because of its limited duration and tightly targeted nature, the FFS has carved out a niche for UNDP in the immediate post-conflict recovery space that it has not effectively inhabited in the past and that prior Administrators have tried to encourage UNDP to fill. The considerable success achieved in fulfilling inherently political objectives would suggest that the FFS could be replicated in adapted form in other countries and settings with similar, active conflicts under way as long as similar management and oversight mechanisms can be applied.

The sheer volume of achievements and the number of completed and ongoing rehabilitation projects in the very short period of under the past two years, as contributions escalated and areas controlled by ISIL were liberated, are truly impressive and the programme has undoubtedly contributed to the spontaneous return of the majority of 4.2 million returnees formerly displaced within the country, at relatively low cost. In turn, one could argue that it has stemmed the pressure on displaced people to join the ranks of refugees and emigrants. Anecdotally, one can also draw a link between the visible economic revitalization of urban centres in the newly liberated areas and the rehabilitation of infrastructure and service facilities by the FFS.

The FFS has successfully demonstrated a model that could, with important adjustments and adaptations to local conditions, successfully become a "product line" for UNDP in such situations that involve the new type of wars that UNDP is faced with. This would require learning not just from the substantive focus of the programme but staffing levels, overall organization, rules and procedures imposed and sequencing (Annex 8).

This rapid reorientation to meet changing needs has rendered the UNDP country programme (2016-2020) obsolete as it was based on an assumption that Iraq was going to make a transition to normal development after the internecine sectarian conflict that had beset the country.

2. **Newly liberated areas and areas receiving large numbers of IDPs were strongly supported by the stabilization component of the programme, with a decrease in engagement in areas in receipt of IDPs from the end of 2017.**

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130 As analysed by the evaluation team, the FFS is the largest stabilization programme to date, even when the multi-project and multi-partner stabilization programmes are considered. This means is that the entire stabilization programme (including ICRRP) is by far the largest stabilization effort to date.

Relatively limited attention has been paid to support the country's priorities outside these areas. Southern areas are experiencing major difficulties and are currently covered only by small interventions. Major programmes which managed to continue to operate outside of newly liberated areas and areas receiving IDPs have not progressed from output to outcome delivery (e.g., LADP II).

3. **The ICRRP was a well-designed, flexible and comprehensive stabilization programme, addressing both short-term needs and the resilience of vulnerable IDP's, refugees and host communities as well as returnees.** The programme achieved and in the majority of cases overachieved against output targets set, which suggests that more ambitious planning may have been in order. However, the recent frequent management changes and the short-term nature of funding received made this difficult. Weaknesses in internal coordination reduced the potential for collaboration and synergy across projects and the long-term sustainability of many of the activities remains precarious, requiring further investment.

The other three pillars

4. **Less attention has been paid to the other three pillars – economic diversification and employment, governance and reconciliation, environment and energy – although a limited number of programmes have been implemented, as foreseen in the country programme or in the management review.** This is not unusual for a country office responding to an emergency. The return to regular programming has however taken longer than it might have.

Economic diversification and employment. The recent creation of this pillar has the potential to respond to one of the country's top priorities, economic reform and employment creation. Its effectiveness will depend on its strategic approach and structure. The current scope of the pillar is however limited and takes over some of the projects previously managed under the governance outcome, including some elements of anti-corruption and decentralization, which have so far delivered limited results at outcome level.

Governance and reconciliation. Once a strong and influential part of the programme, governance is now fragmented and diminished. Where there were 12 different projects contributing to four governance areas during the 2012-2016 period, there are now only three, and one is closing. None of the rule of law projects are continuing. A new area has taken hold in the governance pillar, security sector reform, with a primary focus on law enforcement, but there is no guarantee at present that donors' interest will continue for the time required to have a significant impact. Support for the decentralization of public services, through the Iraq Public Sector Modernization Programme, has been removed from the governance and reconciliation pillar. Its somewhat different implementation strategy has yet to yield results at the implementation level. The relatively new integrated reconciliation programme is a promising attempt at peacebuilding in areas affected by recent conflict. It will need more political support from the national Government and more financial support from donors if it is to succeed.

Environment and energy. This is a growing portfolio. It has not yet formulated a comprehensive and strategic framework to address the priority needs of the country and deliver at outcome and impact level. It is relevant to long-term national priorities, is in line with the UNDP vision to support national counterparts in this area and with the 2030 Agenda, has the potential to contribute to the achievement of environmental benefits while promoting social cohesion and improved livelihoods.

Management and operations

5. **UNDP Iraq has been very effectively managing the delivery of the largest stabilization programme to date, has innovated operational processes and has improved turnaround time to increase transparency and efficiency.** The management efficiency ratio of the Service Centre set up to support the fast and efficient delivery of the stabilization component is noteworthy and is a model which can be replicated. The management decision to use the Service Centre to provide support to all development

projects managed by the country office shows that management has observed the situation and is taking proactive steps to improve the overall efficiency of the country office.

Programme coherence

6. **While progress has been noted and some projects have strong theories of changes or at least logical frameworks in place (e.g., FFS), there is no coherent and comprehensive programme structure, informed by a clear theory of change, in line with national and regional priorities, which is implemented in coordination and matched by strong and targeted resource mobilization efforts which capitalize on recent success stories.** The limited quality assurance and monitoring functions and absence of evaluation capacity has also led to a lack of analysis of performance and effectiveness to support programme development, prioritization and implementation. Absence of knowledge management and information-sharing has exacerbated the tendency to implement programmes in isolation, thereby limiting the opportunity to exploit synergies and leverage expertise (e.g., from outposted offices).

Gender

7. **UNDP Iraq has made relevant contributions towards the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.** Most results to which UNDP contributed were gender-targeted or gender-responsive but not yet transformative. Specific parameters were developed to ensure a gender-sensitive approach to the implementation of stabilization programmes and other areas also provided examples of specific partnerships developed to deliver gender results and facilitate integration of gender dimensions.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

Recommendation 1.

In developing the new country programme, the country office should take care to: (1) align the contributions of UNDP to the changing priorities in the country, driven by the shift to a more stable environment; (2) identify both the comparative strengths of UNDP and key areas where it is able to deliver effectively; (3) develop clear and supporting theories of change for the work of UNDP which identify synergies and leverage available skills and expertise; and (4) support the strategic approach with a strong resource mobilization effort, which builds on the high level of trust by donors and institutional counterparts established through the stabilization programme, and aims to expand presence and expertise based on emerging needs. The country programme development process should ultimately strengthen the strategic focus of the programme, develop synergies across pillars and ensure sustainability.

Iraq is entering a period of economic growth and should become increasingly capable of financing its own reform agendas. UNDP should now take advantage of this window of opportunity: agreements with Iraqi institutions to share the cost of reform programmes are likely to give donors the confidence that contributions will yield greater results than before and increase national ownership. The country office has been proactive in seeking opportunities for cost sharing and direct implementation as Iraq's budget includes investment funds for the first time in years; this course of action should be strengthened.

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The entire programme should be implemented in a coordinated fashion and synergies identified and leveraged. Existing examples of coordination should continue (e.g., between FFS and ICRRP cash-for-work teams) or strengthened (e.g., environment and energy proposal development in cooperation with other teams). New projects and programmes covering cross-cutting issues in several locations should be closely monitored and implemented in partnership with other initiatives operating in the same geographical areas, targeting the same beneficiaries with similar approaches (e.g., the new "Strengthening the Long-Term Resilience of Subnational Authorities in countries affected by the Syrian and Iraqi Crises" project and ICRRP).

Specific programmatic recommendations by pillar:

Stabilization

FFS

- With cautious optimism and bearing in mind past relapses into conflict, consider transitioning the FFS out of the newly liberated areas alone by mid-2020, applying the same mechanism to stabilization activities across Iraq. Any such expansion should be accompanied by a wider array of stabilization activities that in addition to the rehabilitation of essential services and infrastructure also address livelihoods in a more sustainable manner; a component focused on strengthening the rule of law; and a component to strengthen the planning and administrative capacity of local government.

- Building on the recently developed communication strategy, UNDP/FFS needs to urgently scale up its public information campaign and place the Government's role front and centre in revitalizing local economies of the newly liberated areas through activities implemented under the UNDP/FFS.

- Management of the housing sector needs to be very tight; while this implies even more time- consuming and painstaking supervision, given the importance of the sector and the sensitivities associated with it, this must be viewed as an acceptable trade-off.

ICRRP

- The ICRRP management should strategically review programme plans to ensure that they accurately reflect the funding horizon, staffing levels and needs in Iraq, ensuring that targets set within plans are ambitious, are well coordinated internally and externally and account for the efforts necessary for ensuring long-term sustainability

- The senior management of the ICRRP should implement a communication strategy to ensure that governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are assured that UNDP will continue to support them in addressing the needs in the region and counteract perceptions that the focus of efforts in Iraq has shifted to newly liberated areas.

- The basic infrastructure component of the ICRRP should maintain current contracting arrangements in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, recognizing that there is a trade-off between efficiency and the implicit capacity development of working through governorate structures.

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- Historically, microfinance institutions in Iraq were an effective demand-driven financial intermediary offering an alternative to inaccessible formal financial institutions and exploitative traditional moneylenders. UNDP should explore and research the potential of microfinance institutions in Iraq in order to determine their efficacy in providing sustainable solutions to Iraq's livelihood crisis.

Economic diversification and employment

- As a key priority for the country, this should be a prime candidate for close implementation with national counterparts through cost sharing. A comprehensive strategy developed in close cooperation with UNDP staff with expertise in the area, partner agencies and national counterparts is necessary. This should be the basis for resource mobilization.

- Discontinue programmatic engagement if there is no clear commitment from government counterparts to own the results and use them in the long term, thereby ensuring delivery at outcome and impact levels and sustainability. This is especially relevant for the anti-corruption portfolio that was previously part of the governance pillar and is now under this pillar.

- Carefully monitor the effectiveness of new approaches and ensure adaptive management and revisions if delivery does not lead to outcome-level change. This is especially relevant to the new approach taken to promote devolution and decentralization. While LADP II maintained engagement in areas of the country outside newly liberated areas, the project is yet to produce results at outcome level and no evidence of implementation of the plans delivered at provincial and governorate level is available. Its successor will now be managed under this pillar with the increased ambition to "increase growth and job opportunities in selected governorates", as well as improving living conditions for returnees in conflict-affected areas and promoting democratic governance at a local level.

Governance and reconciliation

- The current status of the governance and reconciliation pillar is not viable. At the same time, stakeholders in the country have been very clear about the recognized comparative strength of UNDP to deliver on governance issues. Several stated that UNDP is the only actor adequately positioned to deliver in this area and the risk of withdrawing further support from what is one of the core challenges in Iraq is therefore even more significant. A review of the strategic approach behind engagement in this area is urgently needed and consideration given to restoring UNDP engagement to levels comparable to those that existed previous to the crisis.

- While reluctance to provide support to the Council of Representatives has been understandable up to now, the Council's new leadership, new members and new resolve suggest renewed support that may give UNDP a vehicle for inserting human rights, women's issues, social cohesion and the 2030 Agenda into the policy process.

▶

Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

- The results of the integrated reconciliation programme have been impressive so far. It will be worth the effort for UNDP to argue for clearer and more unequivocal support from the central Government and, where possible, to provide modest support for the local peace committees to function and to finance small-scale initiatives capable of building social cohesion.

Environment and energy

- While environment is becoming a high priority, the country context suggests that the agenda can only be pursued if linked to economic opportunities and employment creation through the promotion of a shift to a green economy, in line with track 3 of the Job Creation and Livelihoods Aligned Strategy, and if seen as a contributing factor to promote social cohesion and defuse tension through the provision of environmental services.

- The current approach of capitalizing on available funds and using all available entry points should be phased out in favour of a strategic approach building on existing achievements (particularly in the area of renewable energy and disaster preparedness) and which provides support at central and governorate levels, based on the comparative strengths of UNDP, coordination with other pillars and in line with national and regional priorities.

Management Response:

The UNDP 2016-2020 country programme cycle will come to a close on 31 December 2019. The new country programme will be aligned with the changed country context, the Government of Iraq's new development priorities as defined in the Iraq Vision 2030 and National Development Plan 2018-2022. The 2020-2024 UNDAF is under finalization to be submitted to the January 2020 Executive Board session for approval.

UNDP has initiated the process for developing the new CPD for 2020-2024. The key points noted in this recommendation have been factored into this process.

| Key Action(s) | Time Frame | Responsible Unit(s) | Tracking* | |
			Status	Comments
1.1 Establish a Core Advisory Group to guide the development of the CPD (2020-2024), including in relation to: • Priorities for Iraq's development trajectory • Assessing the UNDP comparative advantage vis-à-vis other development partners; • Main pillars of UNDP future support, theories of change, key programming outputs for UNDP and synergies across thematic areas of focus; • Capacity gaps and gender inequalities; • Partnership strategies; • Coordination mechanisms; • Assessing risks.	30 June 2019	Senior Management Programme Support Unit		
1.2 Undertake stakeholder consultations to validate UNDP theory of change and programming priorities for 2020-2024.	30 July 2019	Senior Management Programme Support Unit Programme Pillars		
1.3 Finalize the new CPD for the period 2020-2024, containing a robust results framework.	31 December 2019	Senior Management Programme Support Unit Programme Pillars		
1.4 Develop a resource mobilization plan to support the 2020-2024 country programme.	31 December 2019	Senior Management Programme Support Unit		

Recommendation 2.

The UNDP Iraq country office must now emphasize preventing conflict resulting from the lack of reliable access to services on a sustained basis and on preventing secondary migration. UNDP senior management, with support from donors and the Special Representative for Iraq of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI and the Deputy Special Representative, should advocate strongly at the level of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of Finance for reliable allocations from the national budget for recurrent and operational costs associated with services and infrastructure rehabilitated by UNDP. This should be combined with a programme to support social cohesion at local level, in support of and in coordination with UNAMI, which is mandated to support cohesion at national level.

Actual financial flows will need to be jointly verified to ensure sustainability and to forestall rising dissatisfaction among the public.

Management Response:

UNDP stabilization support through the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) is informed by services and projects the Government of Iraq prioritizes from the onset. Furthermore, the project selection process also takes into consideration actual returnee numbers and trends. Overall UNDP observes that the majority of infrastructure handed over to the Government of Iraq has been operationalized. UNDP does acknowledge however that there are instances in which operationalization may have been limited or slow due to a number of local capacity and planning challenges, including the lack of allocation of funding from the national budget for operations and maintenance. Advocacy with the Government of Iraq, to address this concern has consistently been a core part of the management of FFS, including through the Steering Committee, which is co-chaired by the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator and the UNDP Resident Representative. UNDP will scale up its advocacy efforts going forward, including with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the development partners.

Supporting social cohesion programming is a key priority under the current country programme, and accordingly UNDP has supported a combination of downstream and upstream initiatives since 2016. However, UNDP recognizes the opportunity at hand to galvanize the social cohesion support that has been provided to date by aligning under a common strategy and results framework on social cohesion. The new country programme development process provides the needed opportunity to strengthen this alignment, including by integrating strategies across all programme pillars. UNDP will also work in coordination and consultation with UNAMI in defining its programming priorities, in keeping with its comparative advantages and building on the entry points created through the current country programme. The new country programme will also reiterate the need for flexibility to continue with immediate stabilization work while transitioning and expanding its portfolio to achieve longer-term development objectives, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
2.1 Continue advocacy efforts with the Government of Iraq, including through the Steering Committee for the Funding Facility for Stabilization for consistent allocation of financial resources through the national budget, for operations and maintenance of UNDP supported infrastructure for providing basic services.	31 December 2020	Senior Management Stabilization Pillar Governance and Reconciliation Pillar		
2.2 Aligned with the new country programme, develop a strategy on social cohesion for the office and project-level results framework to guide strategic programming interventions to strengthen social cohesion in Iraq.	31 January 2020	Governance and Reconciliation Pillar Programme Support Unit		
2.3 Recruit Chief Technical Adviser for Social Cohesion Pillar in the country office to manage all related initiatives and provide support for mainstreaming conflict-sensitive programming and social cohesion in all interventions.	1 September 2019	Senior Management		

Recommendation 3.

The UNDP Iraq country office should carefully monitor the efficiency gains of delivering all development projects through the Service Centre and ensure that adequate measures are in place to maintain the current level of transparency and efficiency. The Service Centre may experience a significant increase in workload if, as expected, areas of work outside stabilization grow significantly, while the stabilization component, and the FFS in particular, remains active.

The efficiency of the Service Centre is explained in finding 6 and Annex 8. If an increase in workload is compounded by a change in processes due to a return to a "business as usual" scenario, efficiency may be at risk, with implications for the fast delivery of all programmes and the stabilization component specifically, which has made speed one its key features to ensure successful delivery.

Management Response:

UNDP recognizes the key role played by the Service Centre in enabling the delivery of its strategic stabilization and recovery support to the Government and people of Iraq, and the factors that contributed to the success of this role. Therefore, this recommendation is well received, as stretching the Service Centre thinly can have a negative implication upon the pace and quality of UNDP operations support and the reputation it has built for tightly risk managed, fast pace delivery.

The process of formulating the country programme for 2020-2024 is also being capitalized as an opportunity to further review and streamline the country office structure and systems for operations support, with a view to maintain its operational effectiveness, efficiency and transparency. All operations units will be mainstreamed for better efficiency and service delivery.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
3.1 Based on the programming priorities and projected delivery, develop an operational plan for streamlining UNDP Iraq's operations support, including the role of the Service Centre for the following periods: (a) June 2019- December 2019 (b) January 2020-December 2024 This would include developing multiple scenarios for staffing to respond to changes in programming and funding priorities, over the 2020-2024 programme cycle.	30 June 2019	Senior Management Operations Team	Completed	

| **Recommendation 4.** | **The UNDP Iraq country office should strengthen its results-based systems and practices. These efforts should be driven by the need to establish clarity and a sense of priority over what UNDP is seeking to achieve in Iraq.** |

The evaluation notes that staffing of key positions is ongoing and specific recommendations in this area have been provided by the audit report. Additional specific recommendations are as follows:

Quality assurance:

- Strengthen criteria for the development of project documents, both in terms of structure and content (clear identification of results, theory of change, exit strategy, etc.), and in terms of process (who leads the development work, role of government and civil society partners, involvement of donors, etc.).

- Ensure that staff are in place to support programme managers during the development phase, in coordination with relevant thematic leads and under the supervision of the Deputy Resident Representative - Programme.

Monitoring:

- Strengthen the data-collection and tracking system in the office.

- Improve clarity over project development and M&E roles in the programme and in projects.

- Provide more structured training on results-based management practices for programme and project staff.

- While currently operating the most solid monitoring system at output level, UNDP/FFS should start using a systematic monitoring mechanism for outcomes and impact of its work.[131]

Evaluation:

- Evaluations generally require significant resources and time. Therefore, every evaluation must be justified and used in an optimal way (use, purpose and time), why the evaluation is being conducted (the purpose), what the information needs are (demand for information), who will use the information, and how the information will be used.

- Based on the above, develop a realistic evaluation plan, adapt it as circumstances change and implement it.

- Strengthen the quality criteria for evaluations and establish mechanisms for drawing lessons from evaluations.

- Strengthen the criteria for the review and acceptance of evaluation reports.

- Establish a system for tracking and managing recommendations and lessons drawn from evaluations to ensure that they will serve accountability and support learning.

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[131] Data to be collected should cover, for example, the growth of economic activity, the use of services, satisfaction with services delivered and the migration – including the secondary migration – of local populations. To the extent that physical security is also a key determinant of displacement, indicators pertaining to perceptions of security should also be added. To measure impact, such a mechanism should continue to collect data beyond the duration of the work of the FFS in the newly liberated areas. Such a mechanism could be extended to other parts of the country as UNDP shifts its attention from the newly liberated areas. The IOM ("The Return Index: A New Tool to Measure the Quality of Returns, IOM Iraq, August 2018") has recently established a "returns" index that collects data on indicators pertaining to 18 criteria. Data are still a little unreliable, but consideration should be given to contributing to the data collected by the index to make it more complete and reliably able to issue time series data pertaining to these indicators.

Management Response:

The period of programming covered by this evaluation saw Iraq in a constant state of flux due to the ongoing conflict, volatile security situation and economic and political crisis. UNDP was positioned to as the lead development partner to support the Government of Iraq to respond to the crisis at hand, and therefore UNDP made considerable efforts to maintain a strong results focus in its project management which made it possible for the country office to deliver on its largest portfolio – stabilization.

There is however always room for continuous improvement based on lessons learned, particularly in keeping the overall country programme responsive to the changes in the country context. Therefore, as part of an ongoing process, the country office will undertake several strategic actions in the short and medium term to strengthen results-based management systems, including through its programme quality assurance.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
4.1 Complete project evaluations for the largest projects in the current country programme. For example; (a) Iraq's Institutional Performance Management System (I-PSM) (b) Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) (c) Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS)	(a) 31 July 2019 (b) 31 November 2019 (c) 31 March 2020	Programme Support Unit Programme Pillars		
4.2 Operationalize the Programme Support Unit with sufficient resources, to support the process of strengthening the programme quality assurance systems in the country office.	1 August 2019	Senior Management		
4.3 To strengthen the quality assurance systems within the country office; (a) Review and revise the terms of reference and composition of the Programme Quality Assurance committees (i.e., Local Project Appraisal Committee, Small Grant Review Committee) (b) Orientation for the respective committees on the UNDP policies and quality assurance tools	(a) 31 September 2019 (b) 30 March 2020	Senior Management Programme Support Unit		
4.4 Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework and plan for monitoring progress towards achieving the 2020-2024 country programme's outcomes and outputs	31 January 2020	Programme Support Unit Programme Pillars		

4.5 Conduct midyear reviews of achievement of results against the 2020-2024 country programme	31 August 2020	Senior Management Programme Support Unit Programme Pillars Operations Team		
4.6 As part of the country office Learning Plan roll-out, regular training programmes combined with on-the-job training on results-based management for each pillar/project.	31 December 2020	Programme Support Unit Learning Committee		

Recommendation 5.

If UNDP engagement continues in a leading role, country office senior management should ensure that the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster is resourced with adequate human resources, specifically a national cluster coordinator and an information management officer who are independent of UNDP programming and are dedicated to cluster work.

Management Response:

During the period of evaluation, amidst multiple changes in UNDP Iraq Senior Management and a situation of crisis in Iraq, with the available resources UNDP maintained its support (focusing on coordination, technical and resource mobilization) to the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster, albeit not structured in the standard UNDP approach in many other country offices.

UNDP does however recognize there is always room for improvement in the way it works. Therefore, a three-pronged approach will be adopted;

(a) Until 31 December 2019 UNDP will continue its current level of support to the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster – focusing primarily on coordination and information management.

(b) UNDP will elaborate a livelihoods framework for its programming in 2020

(c) Simultaneously the United Nations coordination mechanism that aligns with the new UNDAF in Iraq (2020-2024) will be designed with the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the UNCT. Based on the new proposed mechanism and the UNDP comparative advantage, UNDP will reposition its support, including as required through strengthening the required human resources for technical advisory support, coordination and information management. UNDP support to the future United Nations Cluster/ United Nations coordination systems will be clarified in the CPD for 2020-2024.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
5.1 Continue to support coordination and information management capacities of the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster	31 December 2019	Senior Management Inclusive Growth and Economic Diversification Pillar Stabilization Pillar		
5.2 Elaborate a comprehensive livelihoods framework for UNDP and partners	30 September 2019	Senior Management Inclusive Growth and Economic Diversification Pillar Stabilization Pillar		
5.3 Review the cluster/coordination arrangements proposed to be in place from 2020, aligned with the new UNDAF (2020-2024) and confirm UNDP support, based on its comparative advantage.	31 December 2019	Senior Management Inclusive Growth and Economic Diversification Pillar Stabilization Pillar		

Recommendation 6.

To UNDP Senior Management / UNDP Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (Development Impact Group)/ Crisis Bureau. Building on the revision of the UNDP Programme and Project Management Manual of 2018 which introduced the possibility of developing a "bridging programme,"[132] UNDP should consider developing an instrument for post-conflict stabilization in lieu of a country programme for countries in the midst of conflict where flexibility and political objectives become the priority.

Stabilization in the immediate post-conflict recovery phase should be developed as a standard product line by UNDP, with general donor support and based in large part, but not solely, on the experience gained in Iraq. The substantive content of the product should vary according to the priorities in the country concerned and built around national capacities, but it should be guided by policy work done by UNDP[133] and based broadly on – and perhaps adapted from - the special administrative and management procedures and project structure and staffing pioneered in Iraq.

Such a programme should not be prescriptive, but provide the Resident Representative with leeway to structure actual programme activities within a basket of activities that are standard for such situations[134] including: (1) fast rehabilitation of essential infrastructure and deliver essential services; (2) reassert elements of the rule of law to provide improved physical security and access to justice; and (3) revitalize of economic activity at the local level through business advice and microfinance facilities. The programme should have a general financial envelope from core (regular) resources to cover each of the three areas of activity, with the Resident Representative having the flexibility to mobilize non-core (other) resources in each of three areas in line with political priorities laid out in relevant Security Council resolutions mandating a political or peacekeeping operation. The Executive Board of UNDP should review and approve it for a period of three years prior to a transition to a regular UNDAF and country programme. Speed being of paramount importance, no process should delay the operationalization of stabilization programmes. There should be a system in place to quickly and effectively provide surge support to country offices in case substantive inputs are needed, especially during the set-up phase (e.g., integration of environmental aspects into reconstruction work, application of safeguards, etc).

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[132] "Programme and Project Management (PPM)", UNDP Prescriptive context rewrite, section B5.14, June 2018

[133] See Pillay Rajeev and Jan-Jilles van der Hoeven, Stabilisation: An Independent Stock-Taking and Possible Elements for a Corporate Approach for UNDP, UNDP/Crisis Response Unit, New York, June, 2017 and UNDP, Stabilization and UNDP in the Arab states Region, UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States and Crisis Response Unit, September, 2018 (unpublished draft).

[134] For further substantive content and guidance regarding the content of stabilization activities, see, UNDP, Stabilization and UNDP in the Arab states Region, UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States and Crisis Response Unit, September, 2018 (unpublished draft).

Management Response:

The independent stocktaking study on stabilization commissioned by the Crisis Bureau in 2017 includes Iraq, and outlined a number of substantive and operational lessons learned for future stabilization efforts as part of the wider UNDP post-conflict menu of options and strategies to promote peace and development.

The current provisions of the PPM on the use of a "bridging programme" in conflict contexts directly address the recommendation in terms of wider UNDP efforts in promoting peace in fragile and or conflict/post-conflict environments, and have been successfully used in the case of UNDP activities in Yemen. In addition, stabilization programming being of a localized nature, and aiming at delivering tangible results within a limited time frame, it should be implemented through existing country-level programmatic instruments (such as CPDs or bridging programmes, if applicable)

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
6.1 Review of stabilization experiences in various country contexts	Done	Crisis Bureau		
6.2 Embed stabilization programming within existing country-level programming instruments such as CPDs, or bridging frameworks (when applicable).	Done	Crisis Bureau, Bureau of Management Services, Regional Bureaux		

Recommendation 7.	The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should encourage United Nations agencies with technical capacity to provide support to schools (UNICEF and UNESCO), hospitals, clinics (WHO and UNICEF) and industrial plants (International Labour Organization and perhaps the United Nations Industrial Development Organization) rehabilitated by UNDP/FFS now that they are functioning, in line with Security Council resolution 2421 (2018) (see 2.1., context), to ensure long-term sustainability.
	A wide array of schools, university facilities, clinics/hospitals and industrial factories have been rehabilitated by UNDP. United Nations agencies with technical expertise should be encouraged to step in now to provide technical cooperation for capacity development so that services are brought up to standard and large state-owned enterprises are made competitive in a changed market.
Management Response:	UNDP Iraq stands ready to support the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in facilitating the engagement of relevant United Nations agencies in the country to ensure the long-term sustainability of the results of the FFS interventions. This may include sharing of information and technical support.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
7.1 Brief the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General about evaluation findings and identify priority areas for cooperation and coordination with other agencies	31 December 2019	Senior Management		

* The implementation status is tracked in the Evaluation Resource Centre.

Annexes

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12276.

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

Annex 2. Country at a Glance

Annex 3. Country Office at a Glance

Annex 4. List of Projects for In-depth Review

Annex 5. People Consulted

Annex 6. Documents Consulted

Annex 7. Summary of CPD indicators and status as reported by country office

Annex 8. UNDP FFS management arrangements

Annex 9. UNDP contribution to the Regional Refugee Response and Resilience Plan in Iraq